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The producers

October finds a varied choice of game on the farm shop shelves, particularly at **Casey Fields Farm Shop /Vicars Game**, as Claire Pitcher discovers.

On the farm

Alan Hayward purchased Vicars Game in 1973 and opened a specialist game-processing department in part of the old Reading abattoirs. This then moved to Scours Lane and subsequently to Ashampstead seven years ago. In Ashampstead, Alan and his team have enlarged the wholesale game and meat processing side of the business. "Most of our game is very local to the Newbury area. We are fortunate to be in the centre of an area which is very prolific in wild game," he says. As well as the 200,000 pheasant and partridge they get from sporting estates, they also have Roe deer, Muntjac, hare and rabbit. They process over 5,000 deer each year here and have opened a factory in Ireland where they process another 5,000!

In season

Did you know most game can only be shot at certain times of the year? Certain species of game in particular locations cannot be taken during the Closed Season to allow populations to be maintained. Here's what's available from October: grouse (to 10th December), partridges (to 1st February), pheasant (to 1st February), hare (to 28th February). There are so many species of deer you should be able to find fresh venison most of the year.

Pick of produce

At the farm shop, a team of expert butchers can advise you on what game is in season and how best to serve it. As well as the fresh meat counter there is a huge fridge stocked full of gamey treats – from venison and wild boar, to partridge and pheasant. You can also take your pick from their freezer section too, before perusing the groceries for accompanying seasonal veg and sauces.

Pay a visit

Open Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm and Sundays 10am to 4pm. Off Dog Lane, Ashampstead, RG8 8SJ. Tel. **01635 579663**.

www.caseyfieldsfarmshop.co.uk

