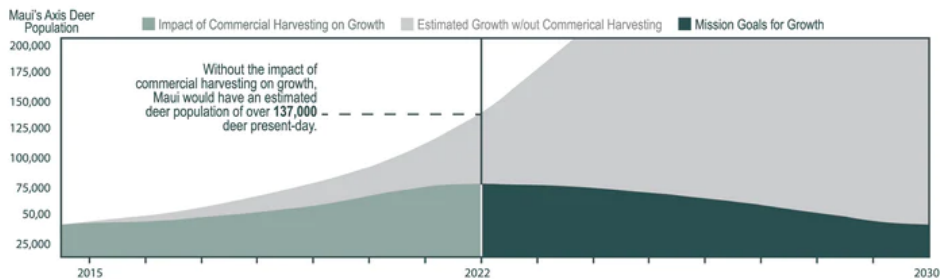
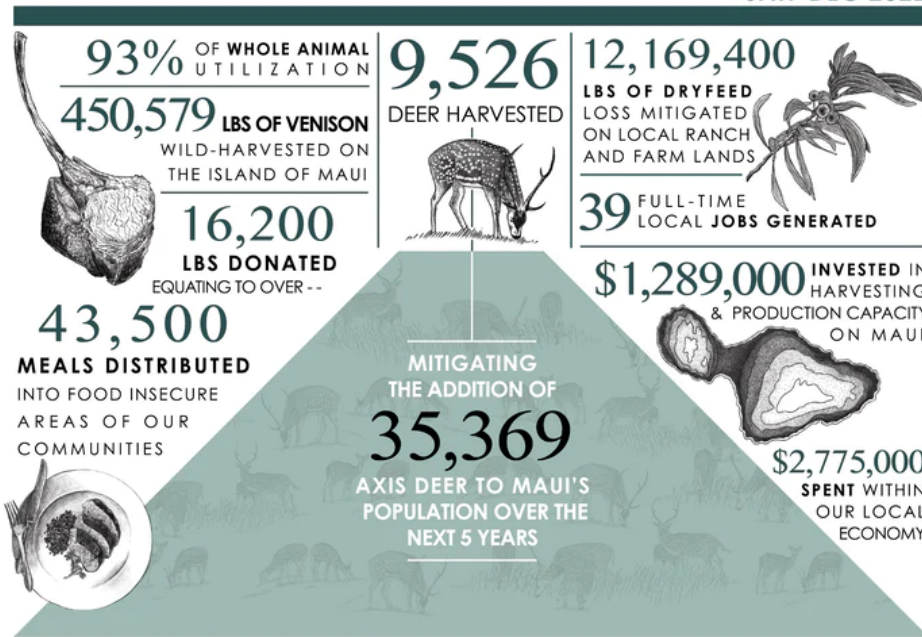


Maui Nui Venison

In 2022, it took 4,857 miles of off-roading, wearing out 11 sets of tires and 57 pairs of boots, fielding 355 lbs of ammunition, shouldering 523,930 lbs of deer, washing the floors 756x, watching 266 sunrises, building 1 new butcher facility, breaking 3 band-saw blades, ordering 71 butcher coats, 116 knives, and 2,464 energy drinks, butchering for 79,065 hrs, printing 50,327 labels, shipping out 18,577 boxes, pressing send on 1 million emails (I'm guessing on that one), and building one extraordinary team - 42 members strong, to turn 9,526 invasive deer into over 450,000 lbs of nutrient dense food.

MAUINUI VENISON

JAN-DEC 2022



Stress Free Sourcing:

We're the only field operation in the world that manages and harvests deer populations using FLIR (Forward Looking Infrared) technology. This technology enables us to detect where the deer are as well as eliminate stress on the animals by allowing all inspection and harvesting to be done entirely at night with the



deer unaware of our presence. Not only is this more humane, it's how we're able to offer meat that is truly wild until the moment of harvest.

As a non-native species, Hawai'i's Axis deer experience minimal stress throughout their lives, through the absence of natural predators and seasonal swings. For us, it is just as important to remove all stress from the harvesting process. When animals are stressed during or immediately before harvest, they rapidly deplete their bodies' sugar stores and, in turn, their lactic acid levels, causing serious adverse effects on meat quality - both texture and flavor. Lactic acid also acts as an anti-microbial and higher levels equate to less bacteria growth and safer meat. The huge effort that goes into our own stress-free sourcing is, first, an ethical choice, in addition to quality control. Stress-free is the difference you can taste.

Commercial harvesting of wild Axis deer on private land in Hawai'i is legal and requires both Federal and State permits along with extensive USDA oversight for food safety. A USDA inspector attends the entire duration of the harvest and, along with a USDA veterinarian, thoroughly inspects every single animal before approving it as safe for human consumption. As an exotic meat, inspection is voluntary, the cost of which falls to us as opposed to other meats (such as beef, pork, lamb, etc.) whose inspection services are covered by the federal government.

All harvesting is done entirely at night to make the process stress-free for the deer. They are never baited, fenced, penned, or corralled and remain wild until the moment of harvest. To achieve this, we, again, rely on our FLIR technology to inspect and harvest each animal without it being aware of our presence.

How can they be USDA Certified?:

The first step for USDA certification starts with both federal and state permits that allow for the legal harvest of an exotic (invasive), non-amenable species on private land in Hawai'i.

The second step for certification is the actual inspection process, which requires a USDA inspector to be present for the entire harvest process, or ante-mortem, where their primary responsibility is to ensure the animal is in good health prior to harvest and then humanely harvested following strict USDA guidelines.

The third step to certification, called post mortem inspection, requires a USDA veterinarian to double check that every deer was healthy and harvested humanely. They also thoroughly inspect the animal's organs and other internal

health markers (like lymph nodes) to ensure the meat is safe for human consumption.



Only after these three steps have been completed can we then stamp the whole carcass as USDA certified. Doing all of this at night, without penning, baiting or interacting with the deer in any way prior to harvest, is what makes our process so unique, humane and ultimately expensive.

We then work with only USDA certified processing plants to take our whole-carcass Axis deer and break them down into the amazing food you see in our fresh, snack and pet products.

Food & Wine Article from June 2023

In the 1860s, eight chestnut brown, white-speckled axis deer were introduced to the Hawaiian island of Moloka'i as a gift to King Kamehameha V. One of the few species of deer that can breed year-round, they quickly multiplied, feasting on grasses and native Hawaiian plants. Hawai'i has no native mammals and the axis deer encountered no predators. A century later, some deer were moved to Maui, where they wreaked havoc.

Think of them as an unchecked army of Pac-Men in the tens of thousands, wantonly munching everything from tender lettuces planted by upcountry Maui farmers to endangered plants that are found nowhere else than this most isolated land mass on earth—many of which are both homes to endangered insects and birds and that prevent soil erosion.

Luckily, Jake and Ku'ulani Muise of Maui Nui Venison are at the forefront of keeping this ecological disaster at bay. Axis deer happens to be delicious, and their business grinds the meat into hamburgers, slices it into medallions that need just a quick sear in butter and a sprinkle of Hawaiian sea salt, and shapes it into hot dogs for nationwide shipping.

“If we hadn't started this seven years ago, there would be 60,000 more deer on Maui,” says Jake. “They can eat anything, past when we get into drought conditions. At their current density, there are so many of them and they're eating so much, and eating grasses down to the root, which cows can't do. But there's nothing more damaging than how axis deer change the dynamics of our watershed—imagine losing miles and miles of reef.”

The arithmetic of Maui Nui Venison is staggering when you consider how small their team is and how much they have grown in 2022 alone. “We carried over 500,000 pounds of axis deer on our backs this year,” Jake tells me. That's 9,526 deer transformed into 450,000 pounds of nutrient-dense food. Last year, their team grew from seven to 42 members, many of them tasked with humanely pursuing the white-tailed deer in darkness using infrared technology in the company of a USDA representative, a unique and innovative partnership that

allows them to serve hunted game for public consumption. Their technology counts individual deer, which has also helped develop some of the most accurate mammal surveys in the world.

Maui Nui Venison functions at every level of maximizing any possible benefits of harvesting the axis deer and combating food insecurity. (The company donates meals and works with private schools converting their cafeterias to serving 100% food from Hawai'i.)



“Our goal is to grow smaller. I think most other businesses want to get bigger. In balancing populations over the next two years, we want to get smaller, manage the deer and move it into a space where it is a value to the food system,” says Jake. Ku‘ulani adds, “If you are the solution, you want to be needed less and less.”