**Hunting of feral goats**

The Department Agriculture, Food and the Marine has been proactive in terms of its engagement with and financial assistance to the Old Irish Goat Society for over five years in a range of activities designed to recognise and conserve the Old Irish Goat.

These activies included:

-funding for characterisation work such as defining a breed standard for the Old Irish Goat (OIG). This involves assessing a large number of animals physical features and characteristics.

-genotyping/DNA sampling a range of animals from across the country to assess at a molecular level whether they are Old Irish Goat animals, or more modern imported breed.

-Education/training/awareness raising of the unique cultural and historical aspect of the Old Irish Goat -funding studies to assess the potential benefits of the Old Irish Goat in conservation grazing activities

-Funding to assist in maintaining a flock of Old Irish Goat animals in a number of centres, and to carry out a targeted mating plan.

Financial support has also been provided to the Society for specific projects under the Rare breed Conservation Scheme. The Society has received €7,000 for various conservation projects since 2018. The Old Irish Goat Society was recognised as a breed society and their breeding programme has been approved by the department since 10th May 2022. The Old Irish Goat has been approved as a Native Rare Breed to Ireland with a conservation status of 'at risk'.

Whilst acknowledging concerns on the hunting of wild or feral goats, this is not within the remit of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible for legislation concerning hunting in Ireland.

Ends

12th July 2022