

Training fund open to women and girls

MORE women and girls living and working in Scottish agriculture are to be able to apply for funding for courses to help develop their skills.

Eligible courses include support in gaining tractor and trailer driving certificates or help to train sheepdogs.

The Practical Training Fund is administered by Lantra Scotland and has already supported more than 400 women and girls to undertake courses to develop their skillset or change careers.

With immediate effect, women and girls over the age of 13 can apply for up to £500, or more on a case by case basis, for the cost of a practical or technical training course through the fund, with the first batch of successful applicants being notified by the end of January 2022.

Opportunities

It has been supported by £75,000 of Scottish Government funding, with £20,000 of the funding ring-fenced for applicants living in island communities.

Rural Affairs Secretary Mairi Gougeon said: "We want to see more women joining those who are already developing a career in Scottish agriculture – which is why it is important that women are given these opportunities in what has been a very male-dominated industry."

Defra reissues General Licences in England and Wales

DEFRA has reissued the three General Licences for the control of certain wild birds, with Wales also reissuing its three licences.

The licences in England came into effect on January 1 and are valid for two years to December 31, 2023.

In Wales, the General Licences are only valid for six months to June 30.

The Countryside Alliance highlighted it was essential the terms and conditions were complied with before carrying out any lethal control.



Small abattoirs are 'under the cosh' of EU law, according to John Mettrick.

Brexit fails to deliver for small abattoirs

▶▶ UK accused of 'goldplating' EU rules

By Abi Kay

BREXIT has failed to deliver for small abattoir owners despite the fact that crushing EU rules have led to many slaughterhouse closures in recent years, an industry leader has warned.

The EU imposition of veterinary inspection fees, for example, has been widely touted as having a damaging effect on the sector.

John Mettrick, who owns a small



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JOHN METTRICK

abattoir in Derbyshire and holds key positions in the Abattoir Sector Group and National Craft Butchers, said the Government was reluctant to diverge from EU law as Ministers fear this could be used as 'an excuse' for the bloc to ban UK exports.

He said: "We have been under the cosh from these EU regulations which saw abattoirs close and we were told when we came out of the EU that we would be in control and we would be able to get rid of some of the regulations which have not been advantageous to small plants.

Worse

"We were told it would be great, but actually, it is worse.

"We are almost more beholden to EU regulation now we are out than when we were in."

The UK has also been accused of 'goldplating' EU rules, by insisting any slaughterhouse which exceeds 1,000 livestock units in a year has full veterinary inspection, as opposed to delayed post-mortem inspection.

By contrast, the bloc allows

greater flexibility to its member states, providing an exemption for small abattoirs from this more burdensome regulation provided their combined annual production does not exceed 5 per cent of the total amount of fresh meat produced in the country.

"This effectively puts a cap on those businesses," Mr Mettrick said.

"It means a business like ours could have to say to farmers we cannot process their stock unless we go for full veterinary supervision if we get close to the total.

"Why would you go for full veterinary supervision when these businesses have been operating with part veterinary supervision, especially when we are short of vets?"

Richard Wynn-Davies, head of operational transformation at the Food Standards Agency, said: "Since leaving the EU, we continue to work through a number of complex issues with other Government departments and industry and the position on the threshold for flexibility for small abattoirs remains part of those ongoing discussions."