

Cost Comparison

A comparison of the cost of a beef that we purchased several years ago to supermarket sale prices at that time for U.S. Choice beef revealed that we paid an additional \$1.58 for hamburger, but steaks and roasts averaged only \$.47 more per pound. Roasts cost us about \$1.37 more, but savings of over \$4 a pound for top of the line steaks offset the cheaper cuts. The price gap is further reduced if one makes use of the organs, suet and bones.

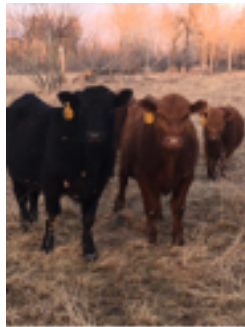
Beef is graded on two main criteria: the degree of marbling (intramuscular fat) in the beef, and the maturity (estimated age of the animal at slaughter). The top three categories found in stores are:

- U.S. Prime – Highest in quality and intramuscular fat, limited supply. Currently, about 2.9% of carcasses grade as Prime.
- U.S. Choice – High quality, widely available in food service industry and retail markets. Choice carcasses are 53.7% of the fed cattle total. The difference between Choice and Prime is largely due to the fat content in the beef. Prime typically has a higher fat content (more and well distributed intramuscular "marbling") than Choice.
- U.S. Select (formerly *Good*) – lowest grade commonly sold at retail, acceptable quality, but is less juicy and tender due to leanness.

Ref: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beef

While grass fed beef may not qualify for U.S. Prime status based on the intramuscular fat, some prefer the leaner meat. From a merely financial perspective, an average of \$6.76/lb for top quality lean beef is a very good deal. Even if one purchases commercial low-end cuts of meat for a couple dollars a pound less, the fat content may be higher and reduce your savings. In addition, lower priced beef may also be of a breed with tougher meat, such as Holstein, versus an Angus. In dealing directly with your farmer, you know exactly what you are getting.

Eating local doesn't get much better than this. The consumer is satisfied with a healthy animal that has received personal attention to its welfare throughout its life cycle. Two local businesses are supported directly, with many other businesses in the community benefiting indirectly. Locally purchased meat is typically not out of line with the current supermarket prices, considering the lower fat content and good selection of high-end cuts. But maybe the best benefit of all is the satisfaction one experiences in supporting the neighbor who provided the meat for one's table, and the fulfillment the farmer gets in knowing he is feeding his community.



With custom-exempt processing, a customer's choice of animal substitutes for official inspection at the time of slaughter.



One pound packages of hamburger, and two to three pound packages of steaks and roasts work well for small families.

Custom Processed Meat Sales Form

HoneyberryUSA, 19736 350th St., Bagley, MN 56621

Name: _____ Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Date ordered: _____ Animal #: _____ or We pick for you: _____

___ whole ___ half ___ quarter (ready for pickup by end of October)

Your animal will be custom-processed, which means that your personal selection, or authorization for us to select the animal, substitutes for an inspection at the processing plant. If you would like to schedule a visit to select your animal, please call us at:

218-331-8071 or email: info@honeyberryusa.com

If you prefer to authorize us to select an animal for you, please sign and date below:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Minnesota Department of Agriculture rules require that our customers own their animals before the animals are processed. Therefore, we are asking for a payment of \$100 by _____. We will bill you for the remainder after your meat is processed. You will need to pay us by pickup day, and pay processor directly upon pickup unless you make arrangements with us for picking up your frozen meat.

Date \$100 deposit paid: _____

Final hanging weight: _____ x \$ _____ / lb hanging weight = \$ _____

- \$100 downpayment = \$ _____ due

Date final payment paid: _____ *Thank you, and we appreciate your business!*

* www.misa.umn.edu/resources/local-food-sales-resources/meat-and-poultry/farmer-overview-selling-meat

Headwaters Meat Cut List: (A quarter beef will give you half your cuts from front and half from rear, half beef will give you either left or right half of animal, pickup 10-14 days later)

- ___ Roasts (ex. 3-4 lb for 4-5 people)
- ___ Steaks (# in pkg)
- ___ Ribs (y/n)
- ___ Soup Bones (y/n) ___ Tongue ___ Heart ___ Liver
- ___ Rounds ___ Cube Steaks (rounds that are mechanically tenderized)
- ___ Ground Beef (1, 1.5 or 2 lb pkgs) ___ Stew meat ___ Jerky ___ Other

Cut for _____ (family size, # people)

“Where’s the beef?”

A Farm-to-Table buyer’s guide for HoneyberryUSA customers

Any gardener or farmer can tell you that the best food they have tasted comes from their own land. When actual production of one's own food is not feasible, being involved in the selection of one's food as close to the source as possible is the next best option. While local fruits, vegetables, and baked goods are fairly easy to acquire, state laws restrict the sale of meat much more stringently. In areas not covered by a Minnesota E2 (Equal to USDA inspection), local beef can be purchased “on the hoof” prior to being slaughtered at a local processor. Thus a customer’s choice of an animal substitutes for official inspection at the time of slaughter, as farmers must offer customers the opportunity to select their own animals or sign a form authorizing the farmer to select an animal for them.*

HoneyberryUSA offers Grass Fed Beef

Our beef is 100% grass fed over summer. Some consumers prefer grain-finished beef, and while there is debate as to whether or not grass fed beef is healthier or better for the environment, we do know that grass and not grain is cattle’s natural food.

Learning about the life cycle of cattle is both helpful and interesting. Bovines in the north are typically born in early spring and stay with their mamas over the summer while they learn how to graze. The calves are weaned in the fall, and the farmer feeds them hay and trace minerals over the winter. Some farmers supplement the feed with corn and oats. Come spring, the yearlings are set out to pasture again until they reach around 1000 pounds or more. Producers typically sell their 18-20 month old animals in October and November when the cattle have neared their maximum weight.

We purchased year old steers in the spring from a farm about an hour away, and are raising them on our naturally grown pasture (no chemicals) for sale in late October. It’s just a short ride to the processor - Headwater’s Meat in Bagley.

The rest of this article provides a “buyer’s guide” for planning your first farm to table beef purchase, using an 1100 lb, 18-month-old, grass-fed steer as an example. While a whole animal could feed a family of four or five for a year, we will use a quarter animal as an example purchase, using a price of \$1.43 / lb live weight. Final price TBD according to market rate this fall for naturally grown grass-fed beef.

Terminology

Live weight: On the hoof e.x. 1200 lb sold in quarters of 300 lb
Hanging weight: 61% of live weight = 183 lb / quarter
Packaged weight: 67% of hanging weight = 122 lb / quarter

I. Determine what percentage of animal you need

- *Determine how many many pounds of final product you need*

A quarter pound of meat per day provides half of the recommended daily allowance of protein for an adult male. So only 91 lbs is needed for a whole year. A quarter of a large beef animal processes down to approximately 122 lbs or 108 lb if more is put into hamburger.

Smaller percentages of the animal may be purchased as long as farmer has an adequate system for tracking the sale of the animal to multiple customers. Halves, and quarters are typical.

__ whole, __ half, __ quarter, __ eighth

- *Cost for one quarter of an 1200 lb animal = \$550 + storage*

\$1.43 live weight/\$2.35 hanging weight works out to:

- > \$430 to farmer, \$120 to processor = \$550, averages **\$5.09/lb packaged**
- > add in \$45/year home storage (freezer/electricity) = \$595 = **\$5.50/lb packaged**

Note: some advertise \$4/lb meat, but watch out as there may be hidden costs associated. Our estimate is based on actual cost of an order with more bone removed, higher percentage processed into burger. It does not include the weight of bones or any organs from processing.

II. Reserve and submit downpayment for your animal

Come to farm and select animal or sign form authorizing farmer to select animal for you.

- \$100 downpayment required by Aug. 1 via cash or check (*or w/ credit card +3%*)

III. Select cuts - Headwaters Meat 1412 Central St W, Bagley, MN 56621 218-694-2789

Anytime prior to slaughter you may visit the processor to select your cuts. Mondays and
The processor has a checklist of cuts, asks how many items or pounds per package, and how thick to slice the steaks (half to three quarter inches is typical). The customer may also say something like, “We’re not fussy. Package it up for two people, half inch steaks, heavy on the hamburger.”

Other value added services: jerky preparation, whether or not the bones and organs are to be saved. Even if the tongue, heart, and liver are not part of your menu, these items can be put to good use as dog food. The butcher shop usually coordinates between shareholders of any particular animal as to who wants which of those “non-standard” cuts.

In our example, you walk out of the butcher shop having paid an average of \$5.09/lb for:

63 lbs of hamburger

45 lbs of various cuts, consisting of 19 packages:

Roasts:

- 1 each of boneless arm, sirloin tip and rump
- 3 chuck

Steaks (two steaks per package):

- 1 package of club
- 2 packages of round
- 3 packages each of sirloin and T-bone
- 4 packages of rib

IV. Pay farmer - prior to picking up meat

You will be notified when your meat is ready to pick up. We will bill you based on the final “hanging weight” (see note below) minus your downpayment. You will be able to pick up your meat from processor following payment.

V. Pick-up meat and pay processor

Notes on Processing:

Hanging Weight

After butchering, the carcass is reduced to approximately two thirds of the live weight. The carcass hangs in cold storage for a couple to several days. The amount of hang time varies per facility in accordance to their freezer space and schedule, which is often limited in the fall. For example, on a 1200 lb steer, the hanging weight of a quarter would weigh approximately 183 lbs. From there, the customer can expect to walk out the door with standard cuts and hamburger totaling two thirds of the hanging weight. *Angus.org* specifies that normally 31% is made into steaks, 31% into roasts, and 38% is ground beef and stew meat. For our example, we selected to put two thirds into hamburger, reducing the final weight down to 108 lbs, instead of the normal 122 lbs, as more bone was discarded. This amount easily fits into a couple of medium sized boxes in the trunk of a car.

Detailed breakdown of costs:

Storage: A small freezer can be purchased for around \$200 (10 year lifespan = \$20/year). Electricity is estimated at \$25 per year.

Beef price: Since beef prices fluctuate weekly, farmer and consumer should agree ahead of time whether the price is preset or based on the current market value at time of slaughter. It is not unreasonable to pay a higher direct marketed price higher than the local sales barn as you know where your animal came from, how it was raised, and farmer pays for transportation to the meat processor. For illustration purposes, \$1.43/lb live weight translates into a \$2.35/lb hanging weight, resulting in an average of \$5.09/lb packaged weight.

Total paid to beef producer: \$430

- Hanging weight x price/lb = 183 lbs x \$2.35 price/lb

Total paid to meat processor: \$120

- Butchering fee (1/4 of total fee) \$11.25 (\$45/4)
- Cutting and wrapping = Hanging weight 183 lbs x \$.55 price/lb = \$100 (+\$1/lb for stew meat)
- Grinding fee for hamburger = 63 lbs of hamburger x \$.15/lb = \$9.45

Total cost of product: 550

Total cost including home storage: \$595= \$49.50/mo

Total price per pound including home freezer/electricity: \$5.50

- Total cost / total pounds of frozen meat \$550/108 = \$5.09/lb
- Storage cost at home (per year): \$45 = \$.41/lb