

WEEKLY NEWS COLUMN
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CONSIDERATIONS FOR LOCALLY SOURCED MEAT

During the pandemic of COVID-19, the United States food supply chain, experienced a disruption. This was painfully evident with U.S. meat supplies as meat plants were closed down causing a decrease in supply at the supermarket and an increase in prices. Due to the limitations seen doing COVID-19, many consumers began looking to their local farmers and ranchers to fill this void.

Local producers may benefit from the opportunity to sell their product directly to consumers and there are several factors that should be considered. On a recent episode of Cattle Chat, the podcast of the Beef Cattle Institute, KSU experts discussed factors that should be considered by producers working to fill the demand for locally sourced beef.

“One of the first challenges is to find customers who are also going to be repeat buyers,” said K-State veterinarian Bob Larson.

Communicating with potential customers is key, but also with the processor, said agricultural economist Dustin Pendell. He said because of the increased demand, many processors are scheduling months out, which has an economic impact on the local community.

Pendell urged beef producers to think what product attributes lend themselves to a marketing niche. Some of the examples he shared were grass fed, antibiotic free, and known farm of origin as potentials for increased premiums.

“You need to educate yourself before entering one of these direct marketing ventures,” Pendell said.

K-State beef cattle extension specialist Bob Weaber said producers also need to decide how they want to sell their product — specifically by the carcass or by individual cuts.

“If I sell a half of beef to someone, they will pay the processing charges and they get all the yield,” he said. “But if I am selling meat by the cut that pricing model is substantially more complex. Finding a home for the less desirable cuts of meat can be a real challenge and, frankly, can make or break the deal.”

Weaber cautions direct marketers to consult with the processors to be sure that they are following all required government regulations on selling products.

K-State veterinarian Brad White stressed the importance of developing a business plan before deciding to market beef off the farm.

“If you are thinking about selling beef to consumers, make sure you communicate with your customers ahead of time, and have a value structure in place as part of your overall business plan,” White said.

Here is the quick summary of considerations for marketing direct to consumers:

- Plan for carcass utilization and pricing strategy.
- Identify relevant regulations.
- Meet customer product demands.
- Plan to communicate often with customers.
- Develop a business plan.

To learn more about this topic, tune into the BCI [Cattle Chat podcast](#).

Cowley County consumers looking for locally sourced beef, pork, lamb or goat may want to take the opportunity to support a local 4-H'er by purchasing an animal to be harvested at an area locker. 4-H members may have livestock available for purchase following the local 4-H livestock showcase later this month. If you are interested in this option or want to know more, contact the Cowley County Extension Office at 620-221-5450 or email Kelsey Nordyke (klndyke@ksu.edu).

Source: Lisa Moser, Kansas State University news services; www.ksre.k-state.edu/news/stories/2020/06/cattle-chat-marketing-beef-directly-to-consumers.html

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Beef Cattle Institute podcast, <https://ksubci.org/media/podcast-2>