

## appendix three: consumer information on buying meat direct from farmers.

### about.

If you are interested in buying meat in bulk directly from a farmer, you can find all of the details here about buying a quarter, half, or whole animal. In fact, this section might actually tell you more than you need to know. If you are buying meat or poultry at a farmers' market or through a cooperative, that meat has been processed according to rules that allow it to be sold as a retail product. In those situations you just buy the meat exactly as you would in a grocery store, and the information in this section is more than you need.

### minnesota regulations for direct-marketed meat.

A fairly new and popular type of meat processing in Minnesota is in "state-equivalent" processing plants. These processors offer an inspected slaughter similar to federally inspected slaughter, but done by state inspectors. Inspected slaughter assures that the animal was healthy at the time of slaughter. Farmers who use either a federally inspected or a "state-equivalent" plant can sell beef by the quarter, half, or whole animal; hogs by the half or whole animal; and lamb and goat by the whole animal. Farmers that have their animals processed under inspection and also get their own food-handler's license may sell meat in smaller packages.

State-equivalent plants and federally inspected plants are still not common in some areas of Minnesota, so buying locally produced meat often means buying "custom processed meat." Farmers who are using custom-exempt processors must sell live animals, and must allow their customers to inspect and choose their animals. Customers can share an animal, so a farmer might have two customers who each buy half of the same hog, or four customers who each buy a quarter of the same beef animal.

Custom processed animals are processed specifically for the end user, to be consumed by him or her, family members, and nonpaying guests. The meat is not to be sold subsequently to other people, which is why packages are labeled "not for sale."

State or federal inspection of the animals is not required during custom-exempt slaughter and processing because it is assumed that the customer has chosen a healthy animal to buy. All facilities that hold custom-exempt certificates are themselves licensed annually and inspected by the state four times per year.

### buying an animal for custom processing.

>You first purchase the animal live, prior to slaughter.

The buyer has a right to inspect the animal before agreeing to buy it.

The farmer may ask the buyer to sign a form verifying that he or she chose the animal, and may ask for a down-payment.<

>You then have it slaughtered and processed.<

You will pay the farmer for the animal and its transportation, and then pay the processor separately for the processing. Buying an animal for custom processing does not mean that you will pick up and take care of a live animal. Farmers will typically provide transportation for the animal. The buyer then needs to contact the processor with instructions on how to process the meat (for example: steaks, roasts, ground meat, and sausage).

### buying poultry directly from farmers.

Poultry producers are permitted to process and sell up to 1,000 birds per year directly from their farm without a license. The birds must be processed on the farm under sanitary conditions, and the farmer must be registered as an exempt poultry producer with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. Only whole processed birds may be sold directly to consumers from the farm premises. No further processing (such as cutting, smoking, etc.) is permitted under this exemption. Poultry processed under an exemption cannot be sold to grocery stores for resale.

## ...how to buy locally produced meat.

questions to discuss with the producer.

>Do you have animals for sale in the amount—whole, side, or quarter (for beef and bison)—I want? Farmers using custom-exempt processing must sell whole animals; if you want less, you may have to wait until another customer agrees to share your animal.<

>When will the animal be ready?<

>Can you provide customer references?<

>When can I come out to look at the animal? If you want to, you have the right to see the animal while it is still alive. You can waive this right and let the farmer choose a healthy animal for you.<

>What is the cost of the animal, and what are the payment terms? If you are using custom-exempt processing, the farmer and the processor must be paid separately. The farmer may request a down-payment on your animal.<

>Which of us will contact the processor?<

>Will you haul the animal to the processor? There may be a limit to the distance the farmer will haul the animal.<

>How much will hauling cost? Is hauling included in the animal's price?<

## why buy meat from local sources?



# appendix three: consumer information on buying meat direct from farmers. [continued]

## having the meat processed.

There are a number of questions that the processor will have about the meat that you have processed. Both producer and processor can help you with these decisions:

- >How thick would you like your steaks cut? <
- >How many steaks or chops per package? <
- >How many people will you be serving (to determine size of individual packages)? <
- >How much of the roast or stew meat do you want ground and how much left whole? <
- >What size would you like your roasts? <
- >What size packages do you want ground meat in (typically one or two pounds)? <
- >How lean would you like your ground beef? <
- >Would you like any special products or services— if they are available— such as smoking, deboning the meat, or making the meat into sausage? <
- >Would you like to have the heart, tongue, liver, tail, etc.? <

Also make sure you know:

- >How much is the basic processing cost?
- Ask about additional charges for sausage making, deboning, smoking or beef jerky; and ask what the payment terms are. <
- >Is there is a wait (especially during deer hunting season)? <
- >When will the meat be ready for pick up, and at what location? <

Not all processors also conduct slaughter. Unless you have the capacity to do your own slaughtering, find someone who does both.

## calculating costs.

meat	weight.	hypothetical cost.
beef	live weight 1,100 lbs. hanging weight 682 lbs. edible product 550 lbs.	Cost for 550 lbs. edible beef product: 682 lbs. @ \$1.50 = \$1,023, plus about \$250 or more for processing.
pork.	live weight 250 lbs. hanging weight 175 lbs. edible product, 165 lbs.	Cost for 165 lbs. edible pork product: 175 lbs. @ \$1.50 = \$263, plus about \$100 or more for processing.
lamb.	live weight 100 lbs. hanging weight 42 lbs. edible product, 35 lbs.	Cost for 35 lbs. edible lamb product: 42 lbs. @ \$1.50 = \$63, plus about \$30 processing.

Understanding the price of an animal purchased whole, or by the side or quarter, is a little more complicated than looking at retail stickers. The final cost of a custom processed animal is often determined by the “hanging weight” of the carcass. Individual meat cuts are not priced separately.

The following chart provides typical figures to help you calculate approximately how much you would pay for and how much you would take home, based on a whole animal. Note that prices, amounts and proportions vary depending on the specific animal.

## what are you getting?

In general:

- >A beef carcass divides up roughly into 15 to 25 percent steaks, 25 percent roasts, 25 to 35 percent ground beef, and 25 percent bone and fat. <
- >A hog carcass divides roughly into 55 percent chops, steaks and roasts, 13 percent ground/stir-fry, 10 percent ribs, 3 percent hocks, and 6 percent bone and fat. <
- >A lamb divides up roughly into 25 percent leg roast and steaks, 30 percent chops and roasts, 20 percent riblets, 20 percent bone and fat. <

Note that custom processed meat is not graded.

## getting the meat home.

Purchasing custom processed meat means buying meat in greater volume than many people usually do. In order to preserve meat quality and safety, you should prepare in advance to keep it frozen during transport and storage. A larger freezer, such as a chest freezer, is invaluable.

## meat is frozen by the processor.

To ensure food safety, all meat products are frozen right after they are cut and wrapped. They will need to stay frozen from the time you pick them up, through the time you put them in your freezer, up until you thaw them for use.

## space requirements.

In general, 30 pounds of meat takes up one cubic foot. Make sure that you have ample freezer space at the time that you order your meat, before you get the meat home!

## transporting meat in the car.

If you are picking up the meat, be prepared to keep the meat frozen for the entire trip home. Total trip time from picking up the meat to putting it in your freezer should be no more than 4 hours.

In the winter, keeping meat frozen is usually not a problem. If you will be carrying the boxes in the car with you, do not run the heater. Take a blanket with you to spread over the boxes to reduce sweating.

In the summer, take one or more good quality coolers. Meat will stay frozen 1 to 2 hours in a cooler if it is completely frozen and wrapped. Move it into a freezer as soon as possible.

## definitions



## storage.

Meat freezes at 28.6° F. Refrigerator life at 30 to 32° F is normally five to seven days. Long-term storage of meat should be at 0° F.

## other resources.

To find a livestock producer: See Appendix 2: “Guide to Local Food Directories in Minnesota.” You can also visit the “Food and Farm Directories” section of the MISA website, [www.misa.umn.edu/Food\\_and\\_Farm\\_Directories2.html](http://www.misa.umn.edu/Food_and_Farm_Directories2.html).

To find a meat processor: The MISA website has a list of processors in Minnesota, [www.misa.umn.edu/Meat\\_Processing\\_Plants.html](http://www.misa.umn.edu/Meat_Processing_Plants.html)

More information on some of the topics in this brochure appears in the following “Meat Sheets.” Contact the Sustainable Farming Association ([farming@charter.net](mailto:farming@charter.net)) to request them:

- >Cuts of beef, pork and lamb.<
- >Calculating costs.<
- >Safe handling of meat.<
- >Definitions of common terms.<
- >State and federal regulations governing direct sale of meat.<
- >Tips for cooking with local lean beef.<

## also check your county extension office.

- >In Minnesota, [www.extension.umn.edu](http://www.extension.umn.edu)<
- >In Wisconsin, [www1.uwex.edu](http://www1.uwex.edu)<

## credits.

This information in this section, “Consumer Information on Buying Meat Direct From Farmers,” was compiled by Jenifer Buckley during her tenure as Coordinator for the Northeast Minnesota Chapter of the Sustainable Farming Association, a membership-based nonprofit coalition of producers and consumers moving farm practices and food systems into a sustainable future.

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## definitions.

- >Live weight: Weight of typical live animal.<
- >Hanging weight, or carcass weight: Weight after slaughter, leaving meat, fat, and bone.<
- >Edible product weight: Weight after the cutting process that trims fat and bone, leaving the product that you take home.<