



## Direct Marketing of Meat

by

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With livestock prices at their current level, it is becoming more and more important for producers to gain access to profitable markets and customers. One way of doing this is through Direct Marketing. This concept is not a new idea by any means. Farmers have been selling farm fresh produce to rural and urban neighbors for generations. However, the number of producers marketing and selling directly to consumers has declined rapidly over the years. As a result farmers often feel they have little or no control over the prices they receive for their products. While there is no silver bullet to increasing farm prices, farmers do have options to add value to what they produce, and in turn receive better prices for their products.

The direct sale of meat products to consumers might be one of those options. By assuming some of the marketing roles involved in transforming the live animal on the farm to retail products ready for consumers' freezers, extra income can be generated for the farmer, and a wholesome, safe food product can be delivered to the consumer at a possible cost savings. Other important advantages to the consumer are:

- 1) Freshness of product
- 2) Convenience of an in-home meat supply
- 3) Knowledge of source of product
- 4) Desired quality (reduced fat, consistency, favorable production practices)

Although a direct marketing approach can result in increased profits, it also carries added responsibility and the potential for some headaches. Major considerations include:

- 1) Producing a high quality/safe product which satisfies customer desires.
- 2) Have an adequate base of potential customers
- 3) Have a good working relationship with local processors and inspectors ( for meat or processed food sales)
- 4) Evaluating competition
- 5) Coordinating transactions between farm and customer
- 6) Determining price
- 7) Collecting the money
- 8) Making good on unacceptable product (guarantee)

To be successful, a producer must give careful attention to these and other considerations involved with this type of marketing. It is also important to remember that directing marketing products will attract certain customers and be ignored by others. The farmer marketer needs to think like a consumer and recognize the many product choices available and how to attract customers to choose your product.

### ***Satisfying Customers***

Customers are the heart of your direct marketing enterprise. You are no longer shielded from them by the packer and retailer. You must do everything within reason to satisfy them and encourage future sales. Your goal should be to provide them with a very pleasurable experience when they purchase the product and every time they consume them. Remember, the “customer is always right.” Some marketers like to give a stick of summer sausage, a jar of maple syrup, or a bottle of barbecue sauce as “bonus gifts” with each purchase. Customers remember these little things.

### ***Repeat Sales***

Some customers may need to be reminded about your product. Consider sending a newsletter which reminds them about ordering more meat, has helpful recipes, or perhaps has some interesting facts about your farm and farming practices.

### ***Selecting a Cooperating Meat Processor***

The meat plant is an extremely important part of your operation. Its appearance and sanitation, the quality of work performed, and attitude and treatment of customers will help make your product successful. It may be worth your while to travel a little further to get the right processing plant.

### ***Meat Inspection Requirements***

All meat derived from livestock sold to consumers must be inspected and passed at a state or federally inspected facility. IF animal is sold live to customer animal may be slaughtered without inspection as long as the meat is consumed by the owner, members of the family, and non-paying guests. Products must be properly labeled. Wisconsin law does not permit a producer to take an inspected carcass home, cut, wrap, and sell the meat to the public. Inspection requirements differ for poultry, rabbit, and exotic meat.

### ***Cutting Instructions***

In most cases the customer deals directly with the meat plant in arranging cutting instructions. Colorful 8 ½ x 11 inch meat charts showing the major cuts from beef, pork, lamb or veal are useful in assisting customers in determining how they want their meat cut. They are available from the National Live Stock and Meat Board. Order at 1-800-368-3138.

### ***Packaging and Storage***

Proper wrapping and rapid freezing contribute to a longer lasting quality product. The goal is to prevent moisture loss from the meat (freezer burn) and keep air out. Remind customers to operate their freezers at 0 degrees F, and to use up beef within 9 months, pork within 4 months, and lamb within 9 months. For greatest customer satisfaction, try to “size” the amount of meat purchased to how fast a family uses it.

### ***Pricing***

There are many pricing and selling arrangements which can be agreed upon by the farmer and buyer. Some of these might be priced on a live weight basis, price on a carcass weight basis, or pricing on a retail product weight basis. Whatever the method, it is important that the customer understands the arrangement. Cost which must be taken into consideration are: animal or meat cost (market value of animal), added value to farmer for direct-to-customer sales, trucking to plant, slaughter charges, and processing fees.

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