



Buying Beef from Back Forty Acres

You can purchase beef by the whole, half or quarter. When you order a quarter, you are getting a half of a half. That is to say, all the various cuts that are available in a side of beef are also available in a quarter, just half as much. When you buy a half, you get all of one side of the half.

When you place an order, we add your name to a list. When beef becomes available, we contact our customers in the order we received their request. We'll call to determine if you are still interested. If yes, great! If no, we will either remove your name or hold your name until next availability – your choice.

Beef is the one product that we do not raise on our farm. A young lady by the name of Becky raises cattle west of Jackson. They are grass or hay fed until about the last 4 months when a corn ration is added to add the fat and marbling. While there are some that prefer a purely grass-fed steer, the majority of our customers prefer beef with good marbling. Our method produces a very good flavor and texture that folks can cook using standard methods.

Becky lets us know when some are close to ready for butchering (15-18 months of age). We will transport the steers ourselves to the meat processor. We use a couple different meat processors in our area. Each are "mom and pop" operations, not big factories. (Currently we use Nagel Meat Processing in Homer 517-568-5035.) We give the processor your name and how much you have ordered (quarter, half or whole). When we call you to let you know that beef is available, we ask that you call the meat processor direct to place your cutting order.

A cutting order is a description of how you want the meat cut (size, thickness of cuts, etc). The meat processor is well practiced in talking people through a cutting order. But if you want to prepare, search the internet for "beef cutting charts". A good one is: <http://www.inlandmeats.com/BeefCuts.html>.

A cutting order gives choices from each part of the steer. For instance the "chuck" is the front shoulder portion. You can choose to get "chuck roast", "ground chuck", or other cuts from that part of the animal. There are many fancy names for the same cuts that retailers use. The meat will be packaged to your specifications, in vacuum sealed plastic bags.

After the animal is killed and gutted, it will be hung for several weeks. This is a normal process for beef called aging. So when you call in your cutting order, don't expect the meat to be ready the next day! The meat processor will call us when ready. Then we will contact you, scheduling a pickup time at the farm.

When you pick up at our farm, that's when you will pay. Your price is \$2.70/lb¹ hanging weight plus the meat processor's charges. We've found that our average hanging weight is about 175 lbs for a quarter. The total cost of a quarter at that weight including processing is around \$538.

A note about "hanging weight": Once they slaughter, gut and skin the steer, they hang it and weigh it. That's the hanging weight. It's the normal way to get a weight on the animal, versus weighing all the individual cuts. The net amount of finished product is usually about 30%-35% less than the hanging weight. This is for two reasons: First, when the beef ages it loses moisture. Second, when the animal is cut into steaks, roasts, etc, bone is removed and fat is trimmed off.

When you buy by the hanging weight, you are paying the same for ground beef as you do for T-bone steak. Assuming 35% waste, that would be about 115 lbs of finished meat, making the price per pound around \$4.50/lb. In a sense, that is the comparison price to what you'd find for cuts in a grocery store.

But our beef is not comparable! Beyond the excellent taste, you have the confidence that it all came from one animal that was raised naturally and humanely.

Any further questions, contact larry@backfortyacres.com.

¹ Price in July 2011, subject to change.