

Meat Buying Guide

Buying Direct from the Farm - Understanding the Cost

Many of us want to buy local and know where our food comes from. At some point the thought “How do I compare the cost” enters in. That is why we offer this guide – to help you understand the costs of buying meat directly from the farm and how to compare the cost with what you would pay at the market. We’re glad you found it. Now let’s get started!

First, some terms...

Live weight – weight of the live animal before slaughter (that was easy!)

Hanging weight – weight of the carcass after slaughter and removal of organs, etc.

Cut-out weight – the actual weight of usable meat cuts

When buying meat wholesale directly from the farm, you will have two costs – producer and processor. First you will pay the farm for the product. The most typical pricing method at the farm is price per pound hanging weight. Then you will pay the processor to slaughter, cut and package the meat to your specifications. Processing cost may be approximately \$0.75 per lb hanging weight plus a rendering fee and sometimes additional cost for specialty products. So, an all-inclusive processing cost might range from \$0.80 - \$1.00/lb hanging weight. These together make up your total cost.

And then one more step to get a price to compare at the market - you must know the weight of meat products that you bring home. Approximately 60 - 70% of the hanging weight ends up coming home, depending on what you use.

Beef Example:

Say you are buying half of a beef animal. The farm sends a finished steer weighing 1,000 pounds to the processor. Hanging weight turns out to be 590 lbs. Your portion is half of that at 295 lbs. You review cutting and packaging instructions with the processor and in a few weeks, you bring home 186 lbs of beef and fire up the grill. Now we can understand your costs.

Hanging weight = 295 lbs

Producer price = \$2.75/lb hanging weight = \$811.25

Processing cost = \$0.92/lb hanging weight = \$271.40

*Your total cost = \$1,082.65

Meat products yielded = 186 lbs

Price to compare = \$5.82/lb

(\$1,082.65/186 lbs)

Pork Example:

Say you are buying half of a pig. The farm sends a finished pig weighing 220 pounds to the processor. Hanging weight turns out to be 154 lbs. Your portion is half of that at 77 lbs. You review cutting and packaging instructions with the processor and in a week or so, you bring home 54 lbs of pork. Now we can understand your costs.

Hanging weight = 77 lbs

Producer price = \$2.25/lb hanging weight = \$173.25

Processing cost = \$1.00/lb hanging weight = \$77.00

*Your total cost = \$250.25

Meat products yielded = 54 lbs

Price to compare = \$4.63/lb

(\$250.25/54 lbs)

KNOW YOUR FOOD.

KNOW YOUR FARMER.

Worksheet to calculate your cost

Purchasing meat wholesale directly from the farm

Hanging weight = _____ lbs

Farm price/lb hanging weight = \$ _____ / lb

Processing cost/lb hanging weight= \$ _____ / lb

(for estimating use \$0.85/lb beef and \$1.00/lb pork)

Total cost/lb hanging weight = \$ _____ / lb

Total cost = \$ _____

Cut-out weight = _____ lbs

(for estimating use 65% of hanging weight)

Price to compare at market = \$ _____ / lb