

County Agent's NOTEBOOK

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County Extension Agent



Truck Retailing Of Meat, Seafood Is Increasing

A recent development in the distribution of meat and seafood is the growing number of middle sales outlets. Merchants usually will position their truck near a heavily traveled intersection or in a shopping center parking lot. Products are sold directly off the back of the truck. Since the merchandise and products sold in this manner are different from what most consumers are accustomed, they should be aware of certain aspects that might affect buying decisions. Among these differences are: the product usually is frozen rather than fresh; it is sold in bulk as opposed to individual packages; pricing often is on a per ounce or per serving basis rather than per pound; and the product is most likely ungraded.

Frozen Versus Fresh Product
Frozen products do not differ nutritionally from fresh products; indeed, many consumers immediately freeze the fresh cuts of meat they purchase. Frozen meat does, however, tend to be darker in color, and precludes any judgment on firmness and texture. These are all measures which consumers have come to use to judge freshness in traditional retail outlets.

Products sold at the "truckload sale" are packaged in bulk, usually in boxes. This packaging method makes selection more difficult, as the product displayed by the merchant is not usually the package the consumer finally ends up buying.

Pricing Differences
Meat sold from trucks normally is priced on a per ounce basis rather than on the traditional per pound basis. Comparison pricing on a per pound level is sometimes difficult if the weight of the product is such that it cannot very easily be converted to a pound basis. For example, a steak priced at \$1.29 for a 5-ounce cut equates to \$4.13 per pound. If prices are compared along your calculator along.

Many of the beef products sold from truck outlets are ungraded. This should not be construed to mean it is not wholesome or nutritious. All products sold to the retailing public must be inspected. Inspection denotes that the animal at the time of slaughter was disease free and that it was slaughtered and processed under sanitary conditions. Grading refers to the classification of carcasses based on several physical characteristics. Most of these characteristics—color, texture, firmness, marbling, etc.—are attributes of the palatability of the meat. (Marbling refers to the flakes of fat interspersed throughout the muscles of the carcass.) The higher the grade of a prime, color, texture, etc., the higher the grade. The most familiar grades are Prime, Choice, Good, and Standard. The grading is conducted by USDA employees and is voluntary, and only about 50 percent of the cattle slaughtered are graded.

The big advantage of purchasing a graded product is consistency. Classification standards insure this. Ungraded products, while just as wholesome, have no standard of measurement from which consumers can judge the aforementioned qualities.

Certify Spring Planted Crops Before Deadline June 15th

June 15, 1982 is the final date to certify all spring planted crops in Colorado County, according to the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service county executive director, D. C. Streckfuss. For program and history purposes rice, corn,

grain sorghum and cotton must be certified at the ASC office in Columbus no later than June 15.

Participating farms enrolled in the program will not have their base reduced in 1983 for underplanting in 1982, he said. Farms that have a base but will not plant a program crop in 1982 need to report a zero planted acreage. This will protect their 1983 base.

ACP Deadline June 30
Streckfuss reminds all producers having approved Agricultural Conservation Program practices completed to report promptly to the ASC office. All spring practices approved must be reported by June 30, 1982. He reported that 1982 funds are out at the present but for those wanting to apply for practices a roster of applicants is being kept in case future money becomes available.

CCC Loan Interest Increased
Commodity and farm storage facility loans disbursed in May by the USDA for CCC will carry 14.125 percent interest rate. This is an increase from April of 13.875.

Conservation Use Acreage
must be quality farm and cropland that was planted to a crop in one of the last two years and cannot be grazed from April 1 to September 30, 1982. It cannot be mechanically harvested in 1982 and must have weeds controlled, according to the ASC office.

Through the disaster part of the program, the ASC eliminated it is still important that farmers file a report with the ASC office for planted acreage credit and yield protection.

Measurement Service
As final certification time is nearing, it is important that exact acreages are reported for program purposes. Streckfuss notes that there is very little tolerance this year on acreages, so rather than be thrown out of the program for being out of compliance and lose all program benefits and possible payments, have your acreages measured in advance of certification by the ASCS.

Crop, Stock Reports Needed
The Texas Crop and Livestock Reporting Service will begin in mid-May asking farmers for 1982 crop acreage and mid-year livestock inventories. Results are confidential whether through the mail or in person by field enumerators and will be published in June. Farmers and ranchers are urged to return their questionnaires if received, promptly. The information will be combined for state and county estimates.

Statistics are for all farm commodities and livestock and are published annually. For free copies write: Texas Crop and Livestock Reporting Service, P. O. Box 70, Austin, TX 78767.

Holiday May 31st
The ASCS office in Columbus will be closed on Monday, May 31st in observance of Memorial Day.

New All-Risk Loss Report Requirements
The dramatic increase in participation in All-Risk or Multi-Peril Crop Insurance mandates a change in notice of damage procedure, according to F. W. Crouch, Jr., Field Operations Director of the Federal Crop Insurance Corporation.

Current requirements from prompt written notice of damage during the growing season will remain in effect. In addition, the producer is asked to provide written notice of probable damage at least 15 days prior to the beginning of harvest. If damage is not discovered until harvest, the grower is required to file a notice of damage report immediately, and to reserve a representative sample of the unharvested crop at least 10 feet wide and extending the full length of the field. The crop residue must be left undisturbed for 15 days from the date of the notice, or until written authority is given by the corporation to do otherwise.

Notices of damage are to include policy and unit number, estimated yield per acre, and estimated amount of indemnity.

This year's Upper Coast Rice Field Day and Tour has been set for June 22 at El Campo. Tour headquarters will be the Silver Wings Ballroom off the west by-pass between Texas 71 and U.S. 59 on FM 2765.

Registration will start at 3 p.m. followed by a tour of rice field demonstrations in Wharton County, host of this year's field day, says Dr. Arlen Klosterboer of Beaumont, agronomist with the Texas Agricultural Extension Service, Texas A&M University System.

Featured on the tour will be demonstrations on rice weed control, weed control on canals and drainage ditches, irrigation efficiency and water losses in canal systems, insect disease control, and rice insect identification and control.

A highlight of the field day and tour will be a discussion on "The Current World Rice Situation and Its Implications for Southern Rice Farmers" by Dr. J. Norman Efferson, retired chancellor of Louisiana State University's College of Agriculture.

A catered barbecue sponsored by area agribusinesses will conclude the field day.

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Achievement School

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scholarship is an award of \$1,500 per academic year for a maximum of five years of undergraduate work.

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