



## Custom Beef Processing: Expected Yields

### EXTENSION

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Recent meat shortages have resulted in an increase of first-time custom slaughter customers. There are significant differences in finished product weight based off multiple factors. The following information will give customers an idea of what they can expect when picking up their custom processed meat.

#### All Cattle Are Not Created Equally!

The first difference that people may notice is simply size or weight. This may be due to age, ration (pasture, grain fed, combination etc.) breed and genetics. The live weight percentage of boneless and lean cuts will not be the same with a 600lb calf vs. a 1,200lb steer. Animals may be lighter muscled or heavier muscled in relation to the frame (skeleton).

#### Aging

Aging is an important step in providing the best product and customer experience. The most common method is to hang (dry age) all beef carcasses for a minimum of 14 days before processing. This allows for a significant increase of tenderness along with an overall better eating experience. This comes with a cost in terms of moisture loss (shrink). A carcass can lose on average 5-7% of the total weight from aging; which may not sound like much but it relates to 30-40lbs on a 600lb carcass. Aging beyond 14 days may result in a “beefy” flavor that is desired by some customers, but extended aging results in increased moisture loss and trimming of finished cuts.

#### Quantity vs. Quality

Most processors strive to provide the best quality product possible. Custom processing sheets allow a processor to produce the specific cuts the customer requests. The processor may trim fat, debone and remove connective tissue (gristle) as needed. All of these factors may reduce the total pounds of finished product but result in a higher quality product.

#### Fat

Fat enhances flavor, palatability and even the perception of tenderness. Commodity beef that is often available at your local grocery store is likely sourced from a variety of breeds that are fed and finished to a weight of 1,100-1,400lbs on average. An animal’s ability to put on fat is de-

pendent on time, quality ration and genetics. Excessive fat will be trimmed off of finished cuts. Although trimming is not beneficial to yields, a fatter carcass will lose less moisture (pounds) during aging.

#### Average Yield Examples

A 1,200lb grain fed steer should result in roughly a 756lb carcass (~60-63% dressing percentage). Aging 14 days results in a 710lb carcass ready to cut (6% shrink). Depending on how fat the animal was and the percentage of bone-in and boneless cuts, a customer can expect to yield 50-65% of the 710lb aged carcass or 355–460lbs of finished product.

A 600lb calf should result in a roughly 330lb carcass (~55% dressing percentage). Aging 14 days results in a 307lb carcass ready to cut (7% shrink).

Since younger cattle will likely not have as much fat as an older animal, one can expect a higher moisture loss and increased trimming. Depending on the percentage of bone-in and boneless cuts, one can expect to yield 45-60% of the aged carcass or 140 – 185lbs of finished product. This is often a result of less muscle in relation to the skeleton.

#### Common Cuts

Depending on desired cut or thickness, a customer can expect the following grilling steaks from one steer or calf:

- 20-26 Ribeye Steaks
- 22-28 T-Bone/Porterhouse Steaks
- 6-8 Filets
- 10-14 Sirloin Steaks

The remainder of the carcass is often divided into roasts, steaks, stew meat, and ground beef.

#### Summary

As stated above, several factors can influence yield, quality and eating experience of meat from a custom slaughtered animal. Knowing these variables can help processors and customers develop a good working relationship.

*\* The goal of OSU's Cowboy Meats is to provide our customers with a safe and wholesome product while producing the best quality products from your livestock. If you have any questions or wish to schedule an appointment, please call (405)744-MEAT.*

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