

4-H Beef: Is It Worth It?

It is about that time of year that 4-Hers have worked hard for—fair time. While fair time can be stressful, it is also a very rewarding time. From livestock animals to photography projects and everything in between, 4-Hers dedicate many hours of hard work to their projects and the fair is their place to showcase it to the entire community. One of the most rewarding events for livestock 4-Hers is the livestock premium sale on July 31 at 6:30 PM. Most premium sales provide 4-Hers with a higher than market value price courtesy of local businesses and other sponsors within the community.

As the COVID-19 pandemic showed, buying local beef was very popular due to shortages of meat caused by illnesses in the packing plants. So why should you buy beef from a local 4-Her? First off, you are supporting our local youth in their projects and helping them fund their animals for the next fair. Secondly, while it is a larger up-front expense, it is cheaper, in the long run, to buy an entire calf from a 4-Her. While any beef is good beef in my opinion, buying an entire animal or even half a beef allows you to get it cut how you want.

According to the University of Wisconsin-Madison and South Dakota State University Extension, a 1300-pound steer will yield 62-64% carcass weight which is about 806 pounds, which is then further processed down to 521 pounds of take-home meat. Within that 521 pounds, you have ground beef, stew meat, chuck roasts, round roasts, a multitude of steaks, etc. There are many different ways to cut your beef, but on average from this 1300-pound steer, you will get about 196 pounds of ground beef/stew meat, and about 325 pounds of roasts and steaks. If you don't like all the types of roasts, you can grind them for ground beef instead.

To purchase this animal from a local 4-Her, you would pay anywhere from \$1.40-\$1.75 per pound, or more depending on the market. For this example, I have based the current live weight price from the USDA at \$1.40 per pound. On a 1300-pound animal, this is \$1,820 plus your butcher and processing cost. While many meat lockers vary in price, a ballpark processing cost would be \$75 to butcher and \$0.70 per pound on your carcass weight. So, \$0.70 x 806

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pounds= \$564.20. For this 4-H steer, you have now spent \$2,459.20 to have premium beef for a great cause.

While most folks would not buy over 500 pounds of beef from a retail business at one time, a comparable amount of meat would cost more up front than a local 4-H steer. As we all know with current rising prices, all these numbers are based on current market value as of June 28, 2022 and 2022 grocery prices as of this writing. To have a comparable amount of meat, one would have as follows: 196 pounds of ground beef/stew meat and 325 pounds of various roasts and steaks. These numbers can and will vary depending if the consumer likes all the types of roasts and steaks. Based on an average price per pound of roast/steak of \$6.94, the consumer would have \$2,255.50 wrapped up in the approximately 325 pounds of steaks/roast alone. For the consumer to buy approximately 196 pounds of ground beef/stew meat at an average price per pound of \$5.93, the total cost would be \$1,162.28. In total, to buy a comparable amount of meat from a 1300-pound steer from a retail case you would spend in excess of \$3,417.78.

While most consumers can't handle buying an entire beef due to freezer space, it is always a great option to consider. Purchasing a 4-H steer from your county fair supports local youth and could potentially save you \$900-\$1000. Southwind District fair dates are as follows:

Allen County – July 28 thru July 31; Bourbon County – July 16 thru July 23; Neosho County – July 21 thru July 25; Woodson County – July 16 thru July 20.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me via email at nickell99@ksu.edu or by phone at 620-365-2242.

***All pricing subject to change and is based on June 28, 2022 market value.**