

Why 31 Cent Steers Cost \$1.39

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Neigh believes, will require a "branded" product which the consumer can rely on. This is required, he said, because the consumer won't be able to inspect the frozen product as readily as the present unfrozen beef.

Neigh said he doesn't understand why consumers would resist the move to frozen beef, as long as they could rely on its

quality, because they generally buy it fresh and take it home and freeze it anyway.

Buy Specials

Asked about beef specials at local retail stores, Neigh said, "Personally, I think the specials are a good buy. You should get in the habit of buying meat on special and stocking up. Buy enough to last from special to special and live out of the freezer."

He said from 30 to 50 cents a pound can often be saved on the better cuts of meat by shopping for specials.

He expects meat specials to continue. "Specials are like stamps. Consumers have come to expect it."

He noted that some Los Angeles stores are "experimenting with week long low priced beef."

When beef prices for the farmer drop, why don't meat prices drop in the local store? he was asked.

Time Lag

There's a considerable time lag between a change in price to the farmer and passing of that price change along to the consumer. What generally happens, according to Neigh, is that when farm prices go up, the retailer's meat costs go up faster than his prices to customers and he takes a loss.

But when farm prices go down, the retailer's prices stay up for a time. Over the long run, it averages out, he said.

But Max Smith, county agent, reminded that from June to September 1969, cattle prices went from 35 to 28 cents, "but I didn't notice any decrease in the retail price."

Besides the normal retailer's lag in dropping prices, Neigh said, consumer demand for beef remained very strong in 1969 and retailers apparently didn't feel it was necessary to drop prices.

In slides, Neigh illustrated some of the key changes in beef production in recent years.

Big Feed Lots

He said 30,000 head lots on the eastern slopes of the Rockies are now common.

These large feeder lots, which contrast with the much smaller operations in the east, have brought changes in marketing.

One slide showed a big terminal market at Denver — vacant.

These used to be small feeder lots and big terminals with nearby packing houses as collection centers, he said, but now the terminals have been dispersed to the big feed lots.

High real estate values, high taxes and labor problems have hastened the demise of the large terminals.

He illustrated a Colorado father-son beef processing operation that started out processing the cattle they raised and now has mushroomed into a giant processing plant handling 200,000 head of cattle a day.

New Techniques

He said many of the packing operations have introduced many new techniques to keep costs down. One plant, he said, has been getting a 27 per cent return on its investment as a result of efficient methods.

But he noted the firm has run into labor problems and is in the midst of a six month strike after attempting to install assembly line techniques — one cut per person — and pay meat cutters rates instead of the higher butcher's wages.

Pennsylvania, where smaller feed lots exist, produces only 50 per cent of the veal and 27 per cent of the beef consumed in the state.

Beef Consumption Up

While there's a trend toward fewer, but more efficient, milk cows, the beef cattle numbers have been increasing rapidly.

'Birds of Pennsylvania' Available from Penn 'U'

Early spring is the best time to keep track of bird species returning to Pennsylvania from the south, says Merrill Wood, author of "Birds of Pennsylvania." The "bird traffic pattern" is not congested at this time of the year like it is in May, he claims.

Mr. Wood wrote "Birds of Pennsylvania" for the agricultural experiment station at Pennsylvania State University. The guidebook contains pen-and-ink drawings of the 156 most common species found in the State.

A paperback volume, it describes briefly the 423 bird species reported in Pennsylvania. Included is a calendar of birdlife, listing species migrating into, or through the state, during each month. Included on 120 pages are the migration habits of each species. "Birds of Pennsylvania" is available for \$1.00 a copy plus 6 cents sales tax from Birds, Box 6000, University Park, Pa., 16802.

While fed beef accounted for only 33 per cent of the nation's cattle in 1947, beef had an overwhelming 69 per cent of the country's cattle market in 1969.

The time involved in feeding out beef cattle has been speeded up. "It used to take four to five years to feed cattle but now only about two years," Neigh said.

In the 1940's, consumption of pork and beef were about even, but since then pork has stayed relatively stable while beef and veal consumption is up sharply.

In 1955, beef consumption per person was 82 pounds, but by 1969, it was 110 pounds.

Beef as a percentage of the nation's total meat consumption has climbed from 44 per cent in 1950 to 60 per cent in 1968.

Beef Prices Rise

In the face of this growing demand, beef prices have been up sharply, particularly in recent years. In 1960, beef cost an average of 81 cents a pound, it had moved up to only 81.6 cents by 1965, but it was 87.2 in 1968 and jumped sharply to 95.6 in 1969.

But while some of the increased beef price was due to rising demand, cost of living has been a factor. Cost of living went up 27 per cent from 1957-59 and wages were up 60 per cent.

"We (as consumers) would like to see food prices take a smaller share of our income and it will," Neigh said. Food accounts for an average of only 16 cents out of dollar of U.S. spending.

Mrs. Doris Thomas, home extension economist, who introduced the speaker, noted, "Many shoppers are not being honest. If they take everything out of the food budget not consumed at the table, they would be shocked" at how small the food budget really is.

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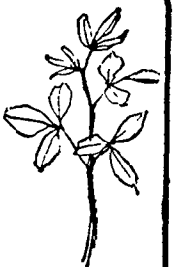
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