

# Suspected of causing marketing pressures

## Boxed beef to be looked into

DENVER, Colo. - Expressing concern over the volatile market for dressed beef in the past few weeks, the American National Cattlemen's Association has set out on a fact-finding mission to determine the possible role boxed beef has played in the erratic market.

Boxed beef means different things to different people, but generally it includes breaking down carcass beef into primal, subprimal and sometimes retail cuts. The cuts are vacuumpacked and put into boxes primarily at the packing-house and retail warehouse level. Recent surveys indicate that about 30 percent of the carcasses are boxed at the packer level.

While the practice of boxing beef is not new, it has increased in recent years. Indications are that more than half of the beef received at retail stores is prefabricated. "Boxed beef clearly is a technological advance that has come of

age," said Wray Finney, president of ANCA. "We are not opposed to such technology, in fact we have spoken favorably of it on many occasions. But we are concerned that the lack of information on the exact volume of boxed beef may be affecting beef prices significantly.

"The price in the marketplace is responsive to a number of signals, such as cattle on feed, slaughter, and cold storage reports. Boxed beef is apparently a large volume item and should be considered along with the traditional market indicators. However, no reliable information is available on the amount of boxed beef moving into trade

channels. We need that type of information," Finney added.

In an effort to obtain the needed additional information on boxed beef and to seek out possible solutions to the problem, Finney has announced that H. W. "Bud" Harrington, chairman of ANCA's Marketing Committee, and Topper Thorpe, manager of Cattle-Fax, ANCA's market analysis service, will meet with USDA officials in Washington.

"Since boxed beef can be stored for longer periods of time than carcass beef, beef supplies on any given day may appear larger than they really are," Finney said. Since boxed beef is still a perishable commodity, there is a time when it must be sold. The "must sell" situations create pressure on the carcass market since buyers can buy boxed beef cheaper than carcass beef.

As an example, in late March, just prior to the Easter holiday period, fed cattle and dressed beef prices began to move sharply higher. This was a result of a decline in fed cattle available, plus a tough trading attitude on the part of feeders who had been losing money on fed cattle since the first of the year.

The price increases were large and came quickly. Eventually packers could not buy fed cattle at a price level that fit the dressed beef price, and they cut back on slaughter volume. In the past this has always forced beef prices higher, but this did not happen. The reason, it appears, was that more boxed beef was available to retailers at lower prices than carcass beef. Of course there were a number of other factors in the market-place, Finney said, but it appears that boxed beef was one of the main reasons the market responded as it did.

Another recent development in beef merchandising, frozen retail cuts of beef, is gaining greater acceptance. This may yet add another dimension to the complicated beef marketing process.

"In theory, both boxed beef and frozen beef should add stability to the market. When there is an oversupply, beef can go into storage, and when supplies are short, beef can come out of storage, thus leveling out supply and theoretically price," according to Finney. "But in the near future these changes are likely to result in more volatile prices than ever before."

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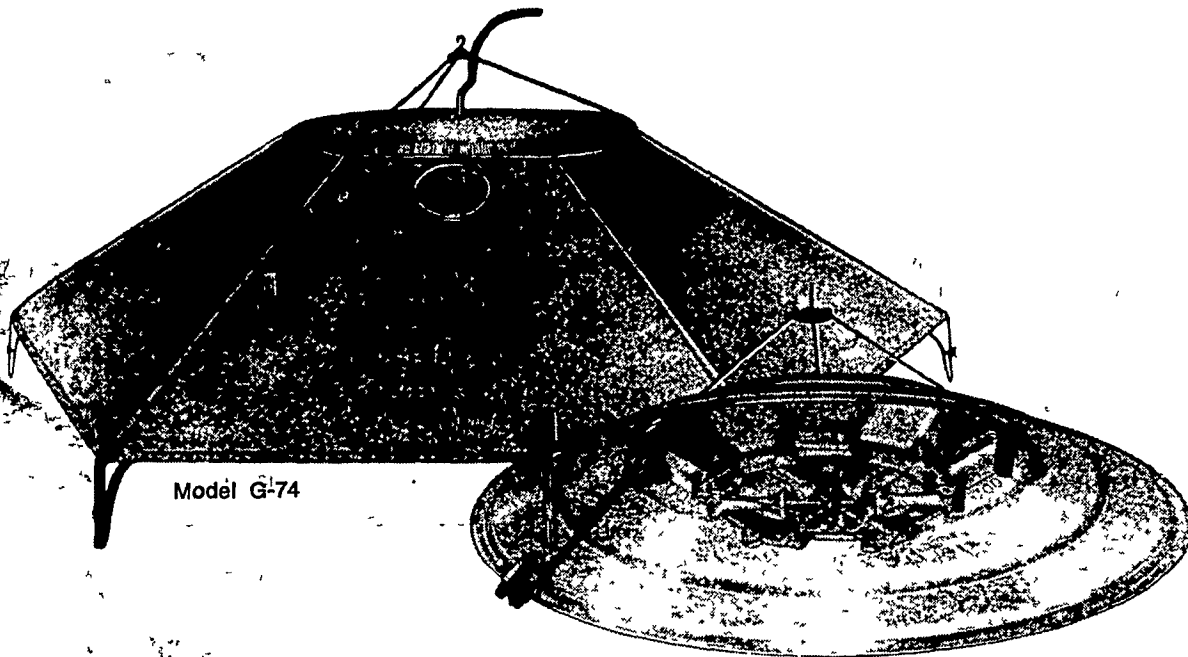
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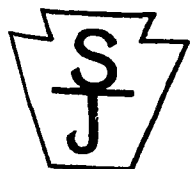
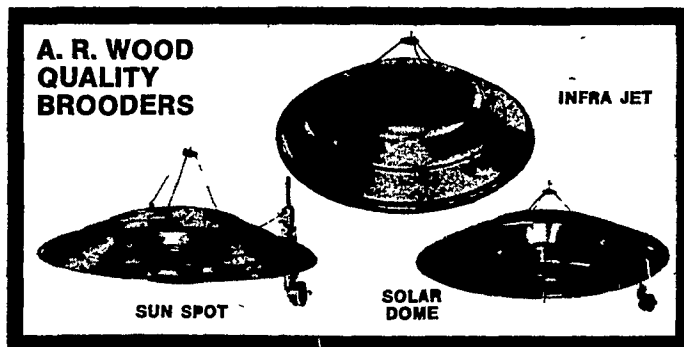
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### Doctor in the Kitchen®

by Laurence M. Hursh, M.D.  
Consultant, National Dairy Council

#### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Everybody seems to recommend milk in the diet. What are some of the concrete reasons for this?

A. No other single food offers the wide variety of essential nutrients that milk brings to you. Also milk is probably the original convenience food. It's always ready for immediate use. You just pour it out and enjoy it, either as a refreshing drink or an ingredient in cooking. Hot or cold, there's little fuss with milk.

Q. How old is man's knowledge of nutrition?

A. Most sources credit 1900 B.C. as the earliest date of record. The Egyptians spotted night blindness and other eye problems as probably being related to diet. Without knowing why, they recommended liver as a remedy. Today we know that foods rich in vitamin A, such as liver, egg yolk, dark green and deep yellow vegetables, butter, whole milk,

cream, cheddar type cheese, and ice cream, can be helpful.

Q. What does protein do for me?

A. It builds and repairs all tissues, helps to build blood and form antibodies to fight infection. Protein can, if needed, supply energy, but this is nutritionally wasteful. Carbohydrates and fats are and should be our main sources of energy.

Q. Do I need fat in my diet?

A. Yes. Some fat is essential. Fats provide a rich source of energy per ounce. Vitamins and essential fatty acids also are derived from fats.

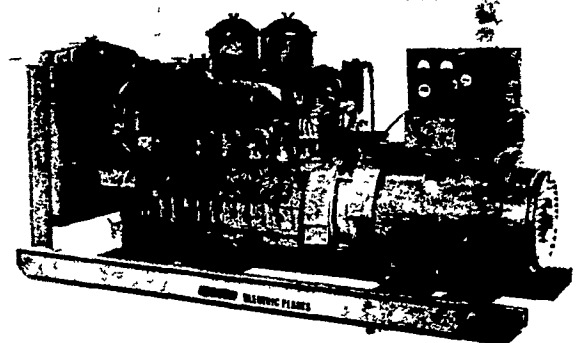
Q. What about low carbohydrate diets?

A. They can be faddish, and possibly dangerous. If you don't get enough carbohydrate in your meals, your body will metabolize fat improperly or even use protein for energy that should be utilized otherwise.

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