



Donna Wilson, 13, from Glen Rock exhibited the champion pair of lambs during the 4-H competition.

Iowa Congressman looks into retail, farm beef price disparity

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Shocked by the September Department of Agriculture figures showing a "disturbing disparity" between producer livestock and consumer meat prices, Representative Berkley Bedell (D-Ia.), contacted corporate leaders of the nation's largest grocery store chains to request information on a possible "retailer effort" to increase these price spreads.

Expressing "deep disappointment" over the trend for the past three months indicating a widening of the livestock producer/meat consumer price spread, Bedell quoted to the grocery store heads the USDA figures released September 4.

"I readily understand that the wholesale-to-retail price spread may be moving up over time to reflect inflationary cost increases," Bedell wrote to the food store executives. "However, my figures would indicate that over the past twelve months, the spread on beef has increased by 15.6 percent while the spread on pork has jumped 23.8 percent."

Congressman Bedell, first alerted to the price discrepancy by Iowa cattlemen in January, began

his long running correspondence with the grocery store heads when he petitioned these large food stores to restore the producers share of the consumer meat dollar to "reasonable levels."

According to Bedell, following his initial efforts, "we saw an earnest effort by the retail industry to promote beef and pork and the figures from the Department of Agriculture indicated a narrowing of the farm-to-retail price spread."

In separate letters to the nation's six largest food store chains, Bedell told the chief executives that he is concerned that the "retail value of choice beef has increased whereas the net farm value has decreased substantially."

"I am greatly concerned over the failure of retail meat prices to reflect reductions in the prices paid to our beef producers, and while pork prices may have risen slightly, the dramatic increase in retail prices has substantially widened the price disparity," said Congressman Bedell, a member of the House Agriculture Committee.

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