

Spruce Creek Meat Company

Where the Feed, the Beef and the Customers Are All Homegrown

BY BETSY STITT

Blair Co. Correspondent

SPRUCE CREEK — Five area farmers have joined to market their beef in an effort to eliminate the "middle man." The Spruce Creek Meat Company was organized to take meat directly from the farm to the consumer.

Incorporated in 1985, the company consists of five farmers from Blair and Huntingdon Counties, a meat scientist and four local businessmen. The farmers are Martin Farms of Blair County, and Elwood Kyper, Mike Lang and Herman and Paul Espy of Huntingdon County.

Espy, the organization's board president, said that the idea has been in the development stage for several years. Espy feels that the concept enables them to avoid the highs and lows of the beef market.

The organization has several objectives in mind. The main goal is to maintain a solid and efficient business to provide consumers with consistently high quality meat. The company feels that, by eliminating the middle man, it will also be able to provide bargains for consumers.

To maintain quality, controlled conditions are the name of the

game. All beef is fed a carefully monitored amount of grain, and extensive records are kept. "I can tell you down to within 10 pounds how much a steer ate," commented Espy. All feed is locally grown.

Espy also pointed out that all meat is free of antibiotics and each animal to be slaughtered is hand picked.

Spruce Creek uses only Angus and Angus crosses. "We are sticking with Angus because many people are convinced they are the best beef buy for their money," Espy stated.

The beef is from quality, young feeder steers between the ages of 18 and 24 months and is trimmed of fat. "All hamburger is ground from young steers, not old animals; "why, it almost melts in your mouth," exclaimed Espy.

The meat sold at the market is aged at least 10 days, or longer at the customer's request. Espy explained that aging greatly improves the flavor of beef.

Spruce Creek Meat Company also offers fresh and smoked pork, lamb, veal, poultry, seafood, deli meats and snack and party trays.

In addition to cutting meat to the buyer's specifications, Spruce Creek also provides nutrition facts,



Paul Espy, president of the board of Spruce Creek Meat Company, inspects some steers ready for market.

cooking tips and information on where the meat comes from.

Presently located near Altoona on Route 220, the company is opening another store in State College. Espy said that the store is

doing even better than expected, the biggest problem being anticipating sales 10 days ahead so that enough beef can be aged.

While Spruce Creek does do its own butchering, the animals are

slaughtered at Shaw Packing Company. In the future, the company hopes to build a slaughterhouse to literally bring the meat from the farm to the consumer.

Shorthorn Breeders Hold Spring Sale

BY BARBARA RADER

Butler Co. Correspondent

MERCER — The recent Shorthorn-Polled Shorthorn Spring Sale held at the Mercer 4-H Park

produced a sale average of \$449 on 28 consignments.

Topping the sale was the last lot to enter the show ring. Woodside Wachess Queen 3dx, consigned by Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Eisiminger

of Waynesburg, sold for \$785. The top bid came from William Ziats of Castle Creek, New York, who outlasted contending bidder, David Whiting, of Edinburg. Born Sept. 7, the calf was sired by S.P. Irish Jim 5X.

The second highest seller was a polled yearling bull consigned by Frank McCracken of Monaca. Helen Foulk, Mercer, paid \$750 for Irishman X, a May 1985 calf sired by IDS Duke of Dublin.

Three other consignments were bid to \$600. They were owned by Armstrong Farms, Saxonburg; Tuscarora Farms, Neelyton; and Woodside Farm.

Volume buyers were Clifford McCartney, Greenville; Fred Kozakovsky and Melvin McClintock of Cooperstown; and the John Whiting family of New Wilmington.

The sale's three bulls averaged \$567, while the 25 heifers averaged \$435.

The sale's chairman was George Hunter of Stoneboro, with Lloyd Braham, Grove City, serving as auctioneer and Mercer Extension agent Bob Calvert reading pedigrees.



Woodside Wachess Queen, consigned by Bradley Eisiminger (at halter), was top seller at the Shorthorn Spring Sale. Buyer William B. Ziats paid \$785.



Livestock Ledger

By

Chester D. Hughes

Extension Livestock Specialist

Beef Breeding Management

The single largest economic loss to the beef cow-calf industry nationally results from females failing to become pregnant. Recent studies indicate that 63 percent of the total reproductive losses to the cow-calf industry are the result of not getting females bred. Certainly there are many factors implicated in why cows don't conceive but the largest contributing factor to these losses is inadequate nutrition.

Nutritional management of the breeding female is important prior to and following calving. Low levels of energy prior to calving extends or lengthens the post partum periods thus not letting cows breed back in the early part of the breeding season. Similarly inadequate levels of energy after calving will result in low first service conception rates.

As we evaluate nutritional requirements of the breeding

females and access to our natural resources we quickly determine that synchronizing our calving season relative to available forages not only meets the nutritional requirements of the cow but also allows optimization of forages thus reducing costs.

Therefore, plan your breeding and resulting calving season so calves are approximately 45 to 60 days of age when pasture forages become available.

And, while we're talking cows, the fly and external parasite season is rapidly approaching. Plan your defense now. There are numerous commercial products available at various costs. Make certain that the products or procedures you select are providing effective control of flies and are cost efficient. Consider dust bags, sprays, feed additives, oillers, backrubbers, and eartags. Good luck.

Carcass Traits Important to Improving Swine Production

By

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NEWARK, Del. — How good are the hogs you finish? If you're like the average producer in the country, you probably don't know. You might be able to tell me how they grow and what their feed efficiency is, but what about their carcass traits?

Selecting breeding stock for improvements in carcass traits has become easier with the development of equipment capable of measuring backfat and loin eye area without slaughtering the animal.

We in the hog industry are blessed with the ability to make rapid changes in our livestock over a relatively short period of time. This is possible because gilts can be bred at six to eight months of age, and then—due to large numbers of piglets in litters—superior individuals can be chosen

for breeding and replacements.

Selection for carcass traits is difficult because all too often we fail to measure carcass characteristics in our hogs. This is usually because we don't have a suitable facility to do the measuring, or because we commonly market our hogs without ever seeing them on the rail.

Yield and grade systems of marketing give you some idea of the type of hogs you're selling. This system takes into account the live weight, dressed weight and grade (an indication of fat cover and muscling) in determining a price for those hogs. Some processing plants go as far as to measure the percent lean cuts, loin eye area and backfat for an even more accurate determination of carcass value.

You might be wondering why I've jumped on this bandwagon. Recently I had the opportunity to view 45 hogs as they were

processed. Following the slaughter, I took backfat measurements and hot carcass weights. On several of the hogs I attempted to guess the backfat and hot carcass weights prior to slaughter. What were the results?

Sometimes I was close and some other times I'd rather not talk about. It takes an extremely skilled eye to predict carcass traits in a live hog. I'm not saying that it's impossible, but it is difficult. Some of the best evaluators will occasionally mess up an evaluation, and I in no way want to classify myself in their league. People who are skilled at determining how a hog will hang have opportunity to look at thousands of hogs on a regular basis.

Pork producers tend to be too removed from the processing plant to be able to evaluate their animals on visual characteristics alone. A processor or butcher is in a better position to do so. My father, who

was a butcher by trade, used to tell me that when he looked at a live hog he saw it hanging on the rail. Seeing lots of animals from lots of different farms helps to develop such skills.

How does a producer get valuable carcass information? By using carcass data from performance tests and from some of the new technology that enables live carcass examination. Some measurements, such as backfat, can be measured using a sterile scalpel and a backfat probe.

Knowing the carcass traits of the slaughter animals in your herd can give you the base line for selecting performance tested boars. A lot of boar producers have carcass data available, along with growth rates and feed efficiencies for siblings of the boars you may be looking to buy. You need to know your own herd's performance in order to select a boar that will improve your herd.

Obviously, if your herd is averaging 1.3 inches of backfat on its finished hogs, a boar with 1.4 inches won't help you at all. Instead, choose a boar with 1.2 inches or less.

How much improvement you make will be based on the trait, its heritability and how different the selected boar is from your herd average.

Never settle for an inferior boar. He will cost you money in reduced market price for your finished hogs, reduced growth rate and feed efficiency. Keep accurate records on your finishers and select boars that help you excel in the hog business. Also avoid keeping replacement females from any sows that produce poor-doers or high-backfat hogs.

Carcass traits are the key to revitalizing consumer interest in pork. Keep abreast of the carcass performance of your hogs and make changes to better your product.