

Family Farm Cooperative Proves Successful

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The first results from the beef test market conducted last fall and early winter of 25 cattle finished to the specifications of the steering committee, for the proposed Pennsylvania Family Farm Cooperative, were presented to the committee on April 10.

While many of the results were positive, additional questions were discovered that need answers before the organization of a new farmer-owned cooperative would be plausible.

Following are some of the positive results of the test market.

Restaurant Market Test

The restaurant initiative of marketing directly to restaurants proved to be a definitive possibility, but it also brought some additional obstacle to the forefront that would need to be addressed before a commercial marketing program could be profitable.

Five reputable restaurants purchased a variety of cuts ranging from hamburger to filet mignon, which were served to their customers. While not all customer surveys were completed, 86 were completed with 87 percent rating their dinners very good to excellent, and 79 percent indicating good value for the money spent.

Sixty-three percent also indicated noticing a difference between Keystone Beef and beef dinners served to them in the past. Additionally, 72 percent indicated they would purchase Keystone Beef dinners again without hesitation and 15 percent indicated a "maybe." Finally, 73 percent of the respondents indicated that "locally produced" was a major attribute that could influence the purchase of Keystone brand beef.

Beef Market Survey

Two other groups were surveyed following the consumption of Keystone brand beef — those who attended the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture Convention in State College, and a random sampling of shoppers at the Uniontown Mall.

While each of the two groups of consumers may exhibit different personal values and ideals, the actual product served them was very satisfying to their tastes.

Additional conclusions reached include:

- "Locally produced," "raised without growth hormones," and "no antibiotic treated feed" were three of the production standards considered to be important by the consumers.
- Freshness, flavor, and color were important to the consumer groups.
- Most of the respondents indicated they would pay a premium for beef with the qualities of Keystone beef.
- To date, most consumers don't purchase precooked entrees or dinners, but 25 percent of the mall respondents did indicate a once-a-week tendency.

Kosher Market

All of the animals were processed to meet Kosher standards and approximately half of the front quarters of beef were sold to the ethnic community. The economic result was an increase of about 20-cent per carcass pound of value that could be earned from the specific marketing opportunity.

Carcass Data Report

As part of the proposed quality standards adopted by the steering

committee, specific carcass quality standards were adopted which were very similar to the Certified Angus Beef and Certified Hereford Beef standards.

They are:

- Quality grade: upper two thirds Choice or higher
- Yield grade: 3.5 or leaner
- Ribeye area: 11.0-13.0 square inches
- Age at slaughter: less than 20 months
- Carcass weight: 600 - 750 pounds.

The following table illustrates some of the data collected from individual animals.

The six animals included in the table illustrate very well the similarity and diversity of the carcass traits available during the test market.

Most of the animals graded choice, most were under .4 inches backfat, most produced ribeyes within the parameters, most produced under 3 percent kidney, pelvic and heart fat, most had some marbling, but about half were above the desirable carcass weight.

All in all, with proper sire selection and good management, meeting the desirable carcass quality standards would not be a major

obstacle.

What Is Next?

After examining the data collected, the steering committee has decided to explore additional opportunities that have been identified, such as marketing directly to selected retail outlets, and exploring the opportunities presented by the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture Community FARM Initiative. This opportunity might include the marketing of a branded hamburger product. Also, a third goal is to acquire additional data relative to carcass shrink losses as a result of the dry aging process.

Several committees were also appointed, including supply, distribution/marketing, capitalization and business plan.

Within several months, the additional data will be collected and summarized, the committees will present preliminary reports, and additional decisions will be made regarding the potential of developing the cooperative.

If anyone is interested in becoming more involved with this beef marketing study, contact Don Fretts at the Fayette County extension office, Don Gardner, from Washington County, and Sam Hunt or Louise DIsidoro, from Fayette County.

Keystone Beef Carcass Data

Date	Carcass Number	Carcass Weight	12th rib Fat	PYG	Ribeye Area	KPH%	Yield Grade	Marbling Score	Quality Grade
Oct 9	Y-3	796.0	0.5"	2.25	11.3	3.0	3.7	Small	Ch Lo
Oct 15	0-7	704.5	0.4"	3.00	13.0	3.0	2.6	Small	Ch Lo
Oct 15	0-5	669.5	0.1"	2.25	15.5	3.0	1.1	Slight	Select
Oct 25	74	787.5	0.5"	2.25	11.4	3.0	3.7	Small	Ch Lo
Nov 6	73	691.5	0.2"	2.5	12.9	2.5	2.0	Mrt	Ch Hi
Nov 20	13	822	0.2"	2.5	13.9	3.5	2.4	Mst	Ch Ave

Wills Spring Fair A Success

TANEYTOWN, Md. — The Wills Spring 4-H and FFA Fair, a one-day show at the Howard County Fairgrounds was conducted recently. Counties across Maryland meet to show their animals and learn more about their animals and how to show them, so they are a little more prepared when they show at their own county fair.

Members of the Progressive Clovers 4-H Club that exhibited dairy goats, poultry, and rabbits were Jason, Amy, and Kevin Ridinger.

Jason Ridinger at the dairy goat show had best doe in show,

grand champion recorded grade and senior champion recorded grade with "Ridinger's Easter 'EB' Bonnet." Jason also had reserve grand champion recorded grade, reserve senior champion recorded grade with "Ridinger's Magic Elm." He also had junior champion recorded grade with "Ridinger's Easter Bunny." Also shown were grand champion alpine and senior champion alpine with "Ridinger's Hope."

At the poultry show, Jason exhibited reserve supreme grand champion of show and grand champion large fowl with

an Americana Hen. He also exhibited reserve champion featherleg with a Buff Brahma Bantam Hen.

Jason entered six dairy goats, 12 chickens and two rabbits.

Amy Ridinger at the poultry show exhibited reserve grand champion egg production and champion heavy weight egg production with a Sexlink Hen. She also won reserve champion American Breed and reserve champion large fowl with a Rhode Island Red Hen.

Amy entered six dairy goats, 12 chickens, and two rabbits.

Kevin Ridinger at the poultry show, exhibited grand champion production bird and champion light weight egg production with a White Leghorn Hen. Kevin also exhibited reserve champion Bearded American with an Americana Hen.

Kevin, first year 4-H'er, entered four dairy goats, 12 chickens, and one rabbit.



Jason Ridinger best doe in show, grand champion recorded grade, and senior champion recorded grade with "Ridinger's Easter 'EB' Bonnet."

On the left, holding a plate and rosette, is Brad Brauning, 4-H exhibition handler for Jason at the Wills Spring 4-H & FFA Fair.



Amy Ridinger, reserve grand champion egg production and champion heavy weight egg production with a Sexlink Hen.



Kevin Ridinger holds his plate and rosettes for grand champion production bird and champion light weight egg production with a White Leghorn Hen at the Wills Spring 4-H & FFA Fair. His dad, Arthur Ridinger, is holding the hen.