



## Interested In Buying Local Meat?

### Locating a Farm Raising Meat for Sale in NC:

In NC, there are over 700 small farms raising meat for sale. North Carolina Department of Agriculture Meat and Poultry Inspection Division manages a list of these farms since they are required to register as meat and poultry handlers in NC. To view this list, visit <http://www.ncagr.gov/MeatPoultry/meathandlers.htm> and select *Registered North Carolina Meat and Poultry Handlers*. This list contains names, addresses, and phone numbers for meat businesses and farms. Look for an (F) after the name to denote if the business is a farm.

### Determining the Right Farm for You:

With the increase in demand for product transparency, consumers are faced with a multitude of options when it comes to what type of meat to buy and from what farm. A growing number of farmers are adding claims to the labels such as pastured, grass fed, free roaming, grass-finished, grain-finished, and countless more. While this provides the consumer with extensive purchasing options, it can also be overwhelming and confusing. While no complete regulatory list exists for voluntary claims, some non-regulatory consumer information guides exist, such as Animal Welfare Approved's *Food Labels Exposed*, which provides descriptions to some common product claims intended for consumers not producers. Please keep in mind these claims can be misinterpreted so talk to your farmer and visit their farm to make sure the production practices meet your needs.

### Determining How Much Meat You Need:

When buying from local farmers, you have the option to buying individual retail cuts, bundles (which may be a combination of retail cuts or larger pieces), quarters, halves, or whole animal. The farmer may arrange for the processing of the animal for you or you may arrange for the processing and pick up the meat directly from the processor. If it's your first time buying whole animal, having the farmer arrange for the processing will save you some steps. Make sure the cost of the product includes vacuum sealed meat if you are receiving retail cuts and sub-primals since butcher paper lends itself to spoilage and freezer burn if stored in the freezer. If you are buying in bulk, you may want to invest in a small food vacuum sealer (can range from \$30-\$150 at big box stores) after you have broken down the larger parts.

Typically the most cost effective method is to buy in bulk. Before buying in bulk, consider how much meat you buy on average in a month and then multiple that by the recommended freezer storage times provided by Food Safety and Inspection Service. The recommended [Freezer Inspection Chart](#) for meat can depend on the cut, fat content, and other variables so some cuts you may keep all year and other cuts should be eaten within a month or two. To view the Freezer Inspection Chart, go to <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/> and then search Freezing and Food Safety. The chart will be at the bottom of the page.

Item	Months
Bacon and Sausage	1 to 2
Casseroles	2 to 3
Egg whites or egg substitutes	12
Frozen Dinners and Entrees	3 to 4
Gravy, meat or poultry	2 to 3
Ham, Hotdogs and Lunchmeats	1 to 2
Meat, uncooked roasts	4 to 12
Meat, uncooked steaks or chops	4 to 12
Meat, uncooked ground	3 to 4
Meat, cooked	2 to 3
Poultry, uncooked whole	12
Poultry, uncooked parts	9
Poultry, uncooked giblets	3 to 4
Poultry, cooked	4
Soups and Stews	2 to 3
Wild game, uncooked	8 to 12

Figure 1 [www.fsis.usda.gov/](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/) (Freezer and Food Safety)

### Determining the Cost Breakdown:

An average rule of thumb for hot carcass weight is 60%-64% of the live weight of the animal. Depending on how you or your farmer get your animal processed, you can then expect an average of 50%-65% of hot carcass weight to retail cuts, though that will vary among species and processing options. So, for example, if you have 1,000 lb. steer, you may have 600lbs. hot carcass weight, and 340 lbs. of retail meat which is then typically multiplied by price per pound. If you choose to buy in bulk and not retail cuts, your cost for a whole steer will likely be based off the 600 lbs of hot carcass weight. Some farms charge based on carcass weight, some based on “boxed or retail” weight that is actually delivered. Typically farmers will charge a cheaper price/pound for whole, sides, and quarters since the processor charges less for not having to fabricate the meat into retail cuts and provide packaging. The consumer also keeps the 50-65% of fat, bones, organ meats, trotters, etc. that would have been not available if the processor fabricated retail cuts. This can be an added benefit for home chefs who want to use soup bones and less popular parts of the animal.

### Plan for Proper Storage:

You’ll also want to think about storage. Most consumers don’t own a chest freezer these days so it’s important to think about your current freezer space when buying bulk meat products. As a rule of thumb, approximately 35-40 lbs. of meat will require 1 cubic ft. of freezer space if the meat is cut and wrapped. A conventional freezer (about 4 Cu Ft) will typically hold a quarter of beef if the freezer is completely empty and the meat is cut into retail cuts (Beef may average 135-150 lbs. for a quarter if the hanging weight of the animal was about 900-1000 lbs.). Remember to allow for slightly more space if the meat is oddly packaged. Most consumers buying in bulk will want to invest in a chest freezer.

### Ask Questions:

Remember to ask your farmer questions you may have pertaining to cooking certain cuts and processing options. Your farmer can help advise you on processing options including portion sizes that may work best for your household.