MARKETING MEAT
direct to consumers

A WEBINAR SERIES FOR PRODUCERS INTERESTED IN MARKETING THEIR FARM-FRESH MEATS

Part 1- Creating the Product Consumers Expect

Alex Tigue
Regional Extension Agent
Alabama Cooperative Extension System
Immense Opportunity for Local Meat Production

Consumers are seeking out locally produced meats that have never done so before

• Price issues
• Commercial availability

Producers must deliver on their expectations

• Consumers are normally price driven
• Why pay for sub-par product? (or more?)
What do consumers expect?

Palatability
  • Tenderness
  • Juiciness
  • Flavor

Some Species Variation

This requires an animal to be “finished”
What does “finished” mean?

For Cattle:

• Approaching Mature Weight
  • Weight dependent on frame

• Muscle Growth has slowed

• Fat deposition increased
  • Targeting 0.5-0.6”
Intramuscular Fat

• Marbling important in beef carcass evaluation. Helps with tenderness, juiciness and flavor

Genetics and Nutrition
Fatness

Yield Grade 3 vs Yield Grade 5

Photo by blackinkwithcab.com
What does “finished” mean?

For Swine, typically:

• 225-275# live weight

• Carcass still very lean

• Heavily Muscled
What does “finished” mean?

For small ruminants:

• Moving Target

• Depends largely on holidays

• Whole animal vs. fabricated carcass
Nutritional Management for Growing Beef Cattle
Nutrient requirements of growing beef cattle
The basis for a feeding program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Growing animals targeting 3.0# ADG (1200# Finish Weight)</th>
<th>TDN % Required</th>
<th>CP % Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>600# Calves</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>15.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700# Calves</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800# Yearlings</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900# Yearlings</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from NRC for Beef Cattle 7th ed. (2000)
## Energy and Crude Protein Value of Forages and Feeds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forage or Feed</th>
<th>Total Digestible Nutrients, %</th>
<th>Crude Protein, %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bahiagrass Pasture</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bermudagrass Pasture</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tall Fescue Pasture</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Ryegrass Pasture</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bermudagrass Hay</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tall Fescue Hay</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soybean Hulls</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corn Gluten Feed</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distillers Grains</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial 14% Feed</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two Major Production Systems

Grassfed/Grass Finished
- Perceived health benefits
- Lean
- Grass-fed Flavor

Grain finished
- Typical finishing method
- Widely accepted by consumers
- White fat/grain-fed flavor
Finishing cattle with grain

General Considerations:

- Maintain 0.5% BW Roughage
  - 2.0% BW Concentrate feed
  - Free choice hay/grazing

- Hand-fed or Self-fed

- Make diet changes slowly
Finishing cattle with grain

Example Nutritional Management Plan:
• Wean at 500-600#
• Feed commodities to 800# (2-2.5# ADG)
• Feed 80% Grain/20% Roughage until “Finished”

Alabama Beef Handbook or Freezer Beef Reference Guide at aces.edu
Finishing cattle with grain

Many commercial feeds will work:

• Work with your feed distributor
• Many complete feeds can work
  • “Grower”, “Developer”, “Bull Test/Grower”
• Avoid using feeds designed for brood cows
• Feed Tags likely won’t have TDN
Evaluating Commercial Supplements

• Ingredients are an important consideration
  • Is there a combination of protein and energy ingredients?
Commercial Feeds

- Quick/Rough Estimate of TDN or Energy:
  - TDN = 80% - Crude Fiber % listed on tag
Finishing cattle with grain

Purchasing Feed in bulk
- Feed is the biggest expense
- 1,500-4,500# Feed/calf
- Minimum 3 tons delivered
- Reduced prices for full loads
- 15 Steers could eat a 24 ton load of feed
How long will I have to feed my calf?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ship/Starting Weight</th>
<th>Days On Feed</th>
<th>Finished Weight</th>
<th>ADG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 600</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>1185</td>
<td>3.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600-649</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>1226</td>
<td>3.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>650-699</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>1269</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>700-749</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>1306</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>750-799</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>1320</td>
<td>3.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>800-849</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>1364</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>850-899</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>1417</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>900-949</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>1446</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>950-999</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>1508</td>
<td>3.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 1000</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1621</td>
<td>4.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>170</strong></td>
<td><strong>1311</strong></td>
<td><strong>3.44</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is possible with grass-fed?


- Compared 30 Angus-sired steers split onto 3 diets:
  100% Ryegrass, Ryegrass + Grain Supplement, and Corn-based finishing diet
- Ryegrass finished calves had lower USDA Yield Grade (leaner carcass)
- No differences in Quality Grade or Marbling Score

**IT IS POSSIBLE TO TRULY FINISH CATTLE ON FORAGE!!!**

*Under very specific conditions....*
Average Daily Gain of Forage-Finished Steers in Alabama

Growing Phase - Cool-Season Annuals

Initial BW: ~783 lb
Final BW: ~1,166 lb

Finishing Phase – Warm-Season Annuals

Initial BW: ~1,230 lb
Final BW: ~1,324 lb

Cline, 2010; Mullenix et al., 2012
What is realistic with grass-fed?

Vast majority of research paints a different picture

- Leaner Carcasses
- Lower Marbling Scores
- Slower Growth
- Smaller Carcasses/More Days on Feed
- Potential Consumer Sensory Issues
What forage systems work?

Cool-season Annuals
• Ryegrass, Small Grains, Clovers
• Simplest, Easiest

Warm-season Annuals
• Crabgrass, Millets, etc.
• Weather issues
• Quality late season

Cool-season Perennials
• Novel-endophyte fescues, Orchardgrass
• North Alabama
What forage systems might work?

Baleage
• Relatively high cost
• Spoilage if underutilized

Alfalfa
• Requires perfect management

Intensely Management WSP
• Early in the season
• Good grazing management
What forage systems won’t work?

Warm-season Perennials

• Bahiagrass, bermudagrass
• Continuously grazed

Kentucky 31 Fescue

• Toxic endophyte
2018 Hay Quality
Samples from AU Soil Testing Lab

Slide adapted from Dr. Kim Mullenix
Other Considerations for Cattle

Breed Types
- Dairy Breeds
  - Holsteins vs. Jerseys
- Wagyu
- Longhorns
- Brahman-influenced
- Mini’s and small-framed

Sex Differences
- Heifers
  - Fatter, Smaller, More Marbling, Less Efficient
- Steers

Production Practices
- Implants, Ionophores, Antibiotics, etc.
Age is a major consideration for Cattle

Under 30 months of Age
- No restrictions
- Young, Tenderness
- USDA Maturity A

Over 30 months
- Specified Risk Materials
  - Head, Spinal Column, Dorsal Root Ganglia
- Can be a challenge for Grass-finished animals
Management considerations for growing Swine
Housing is much different than cattle/sheep/goats

Good Housing MUST:
• Provide Shade at all points of the day
• At least 1 wall as a wind break
• 3 walls best, facing south
• Keep the animals relatively clean
• Keep pigs in and other animals out
• Adequate space
  • 8-10 sq. ft. per pig minimum

Photo courtesy of NWAt 4H
Feeding

Two ways to feed pigs:

• **Hand Feeding**
  • Hand feed the pigs every day
    • Preferably multiple times per day
  • Feed to the pigs’ appetite
  • Less dominate pig will get pushed away

• **Full Feed/Self Feeder**
  • Pigs have access to feed all the time
  • Dominate pig cannot keep other pig away
  • Must be checked on daily
  • **Preferred method**
Feeding

Pigs require adequate nutrition to grow

- **FEED A COMMERCIALLY MIXED RATION**
- Use a GROWER ration.
- During the last few weeks, potentially a FINISHER ration
- If you HAVE to mix your own feed, find a commercial blend specifically for GROWING hogs
- **CRACKED CORN, WHOLE CORN, SWEET FEED, ALL STOCK, ETC. WON’T WORK**
- **PIGS ARE NOT RUMINANTS, GRAZING ISN’T EFFECTIVE**
- 800-1400 lbs. of feed per pig
Expectations with pigs

Starting with a 50# Feeder pig:
• Market Weight in 120-150 days

Never feed/harvest boars

Significant breed differences
• Mangalitsa
• York/white pigs
• Duroc/Hamp Terminal Pigs
Delivering your animal to the processor

Considerations:
• SCHEDULE IN ADVANCE
• Communicate with the processor
• Use low stress-handling
• Withhold feed 24-hr
• Check withdrawal times on animal health products
• **Make sure animal is healthy**
• Be clear on ownership
Conclusion

Producers have a tremendous opportunity

• Understand what you consumer wants

• Properly manage to create a “finished” animal

• Make sure it arrives at harvest in the best condition possible

Photo courtesy of NWAL 4H
Questions?

Alex Tigue
Regional Extension Agent
256-309-9496
dat0002@aces.edu

June 3rd-12:00 PM
The Processing Process
-Dr. Jason Sawyer

June 5th-12:00 PM
Getting your product to Market....and getting paid for it
-Ellie Watson
-Alex Tigue