



Views from VanDeWalle

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Celebrate Beef Month

As we enter into the spring and summer months, nothing smells better than a delicious, juicy hamburger or steak on the grill and being able to barbecue outside with friends and family. It's no surprise then that May is National Beef Month! The beef industry is especially important to Nebraska's economy. In fact, according to the USDA National Ag Statistics Service, Nebraska ranks top in the nation in beef and beef product exports and second in the nation for having approximately 6.8 million head of all cattle and calves in the state (February 2019). So, why is Nebraska, the beef state? It has a unique mix of natural resources and according to the Nebraska Beef Council, cattle turn grass from 24 million acres of rangeland and pasture, more than one half of Nebraska's land mass, into protein and many other products for humans. Land that is grazed allows more people to be fed than otherwise possible and more than one billion bushels of corn are produced in Nebraska, of which 40% is fed to livestock in the state.

Now that I have explained how and why the beef industry is important to Nebraska, let's explore the health benefits of beef. Beef is a good source of zinc, iron and protein and there are 29 cuts of beef that meet the government labeling guidelines for being lean. In fact, a 3 ounce cooked serving of lean beef (which is about the size of a deck of cards) provides 10 essential nutrients and about half of the daily value of protein in about 170 calories. According to recent research from Purdue University, the cuts of beef considered lean can be included as a part of a heart-healthy diet to support cardiovascular health and has consistently demonstrated that the nutrients in beef promote health through life.

With May being beef month, my colleague and I recently provided beef program to students at Shickley Public Schools. I taught lessons to the elementary students on the importance of agriculture, with an emphasis on beef production. Some of the classes were taught the difference between beef and dairy cattle, as there are many people who do not understand the differences between the two. With the disconnect most consumers have with agriculture, it is important to teach people, especially youth the facts about agriculture. Extension assistants Rachel Adam and Nathan Haman taught middle and high school youth about beef nutrition by bringing in the Mobile Beef Lab.

If you would like more information on beef production, you can view our Nebraska Extension website beef.unl.edu. Our Extension experts have a variety of articles from beef nutrition to reproduction to lease information. If you would like recipes or tips for preparing beef, you can also check out Nebraska Extension's food.unl.edu website. There are some great tips on saving money when purchasing beef and links to the Nebraska Beef Council's website which has great recipes as well.

Enjoy some beef today!