

Views from VanDeWalle

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Celebrate Beef Month

As we enter 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. According to the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, Nebraska is first in commercial cattle slaughter, second in beef and veal exports and second in commercial red meat production. According to the Nebraska Beef Council, Nebraska has the top three beef cow counties in the U.S., including the nation's No. 1 cow county – Cherry County, with nearly 166,000 cows. Custer County is No. 2 (100,000) and Holt County is No. 3 (99,000). Also among the top counties in the nation is Lincoln County at No. 12 (69,000).

The Nebraska Beef Council also reports that nearly 5 million head are finished and marketed in Nebraska, a state with a population of 1.9 million residents. January 2022 figures illustrate that Nebraska continues to have far more cattle than people. The 1.8 million cows combined with the nearly 5 million head that are annually fed in Nebraska total nearly 6.8 million cattle. That's over 3.5 times more cattle than people in Nebraska!

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, I want to remind you that the 2023 Nebraska Beef Passport launched May 1 in locations across the state that are known for offering outstanding beef. This year's participants include 29 restaurants and 17 meat processors. This is the 3rd year of the program which encourages people to visit the featured locations and earn points towards prizes offered by the Nebraska Beef Council. Check is out at nebeef.org.

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!

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