

Factors Impacting Total Pounds of Meat From Food Animals

Dr. Lyda G. Garcia, Meat Extension Specialist - Fresh Meat Processing, Department of Animal Sciences
Clif Little, OSU Extension Educator (county)

Small scale meat processors continue to work with livestock producers sending their food animals to process for themselves or for sale to others. Often, producers are uncertain about how much meat to expect. There are various factors that will impact total meat products received. This fact sheet serves as a general guide of what to expect from your meat processor.

Two main factors impacting percentage of meat received are:

- Dressing Percentage
- Carcass Cutting Yield

Dressing Percentage

Dressing Percentage (DP) relates to the percentage of the live animal's weight resulting as a carcass.

Calculation:

$$DP\% = (\text{carcass weight} / \text{live weight}) * 100$$

A greater DP indicates a greater percentage of percent edible product. However, a greater DP does not always mean more saleable/edible product.

Dressing Percentage will be affected by:

- Gut Fill: As gut fill (full on feed at time of slaughter) increases, dressing percentage decreases. DP decreases 2-5% when an animal is weighed off full feed. It is recommended to pull animals off feed for at most 24 hours prior to weighing.
- Muscling: A heavier muscled animal results in a higher dressing percentage.
- Fatness: An animal with more fat will result in a higher DP.
- Mud: Muddy, significantly dirty cattle will result in a lower DP.
- Wool: Lambs with long wool will have a lower DP.
- Skinning hogs vs. scalding: Skinning hogs will impact dressing percentage. External fat remaining on skin will reduce DP.
- Workmanship: Employee skill level can, and will, affect DP.

While the factors discussed above will impact an individual animal's dressing percent, these industry averages can assist with planning :

Average Dressing Percentages:

- Market Hogs: ~70%
- Market Beef: ~60%
- Dairy Steers: ~59%
- Market Lambs: ~50%

Carcass Cutting Yield

Carcass cutting yield tells how much meat results from a carcass. Factors impacting total pounds of meat products include:

- **Fatness:** Leaner carcasses will result in higher yields.
- **Muscling:** Heavier muscled carcasses result in higher yields.
- **Bone-in vs. Boneless:** Bone adds weight to overall weight but does not represent percent edible product yet results in a higher cutting yield. A carcass turned into bone-in cuts versus boneless cuts will have higher cutting yields.
- **External Fat on Muscle Cuts:** More external fat left on muscle cuts will increase cutting yields. Normally, a quarter of an inch is used.

Factors to Consider for When Picking Up Retail Muscle Cuts from the local Meat Processor

- Bone-in vs. Boneless meat cuts – bone-in meat cuts will add weight to the overall meat order versus boneless meat cuts.
- Expecting Porterhouse and T-Bones and Tenderloins - Bone-in products such as Porterhouse T-bones (beef, pork, lamb, and goat) will not allow for whole tenderloins nor strip steaks from one side of a carcass. One of the main muscles included in muscle cuts mentioned previously includes the tenderloin.
 - If Porterhouse, T-bone, and tenderloin (whole or steaks) are wanted, then communicate with the meat processor to utilize one side of a carcass for bone-in steaks and the second side for boneless steaks.
- Expecting Tenderloin steaks or whole, then expect either bone-in or boneless strip steaks as the tenderloin would need to be removed first.
- Muscle cuts from the round, ham, and leg are best processed as roast due the natural function of muscles for movement. These cuts should be cooked as roasts to assist with the tenderization in cooking, long and slow .
- Roast vs. Steak – a roast is a meat cut 2 in. or greater in thickness; steaks are < 2 in in thickness.

Thank you to Dianne Shoemaker and Christine Gelley, from OSU Extension, for reviewing and contributing to this fact sheet.

Disclaimer: This fact sheet is intended to serve as a guide in estimated total pounds of meat products when using a local meat processor. It is best to work with your processor for clarification.