

News Column

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RCLA Summer Tour – August 29, 2021

I can't remember the last time I bought meat – real meat, not hot dogs or brats – in a grocery store. I suppose I have purchased steaks for an Extension event in the last couple of years, but for personal use it has been closer to 30 years since I last purchased grocery store meat.

Like many people I know, our meat counter is the deepfreeze in our basement. If we want steaks, we go to the freezer. If we want pulled pork, we find a shoulder roast in the freezer and slow cook it. If we want bacon,.....well, we might have to wait for the next hog to get big enough until we have more.

I would like to brag that the meat in our freezer is better than anything you can buy in a grocery store, but it really is probably about the same. The lamb might actually be better than you could buy in a store – I know ours was only about six months old and grain fed – but the pork is probably the same as you would find in a store. It's all good.

I'm sure you heard about the shortage of available appointments at local meat lockers during the last year. At one point during the COVID pandemic you couldn't get an appointment for up to 12 months out if you didn't have an established relationship with your local butcher.

There was a short period of time during the last year when major pork packing plants couldn't keep up with slaughter demand and a few hog finishing operations resorted to selling butcher hogs one at a time to buyers with the skills to harvest and cut up their own meat.

One positive result of the temporary meat shortage that some grocery stores experienced

last year is that more consumers now have a renewed interest in buying local. For now at least, it appears more consumers are wanting to stock their freezers by purchasing from local producers and having animals processed at local small-town lockers.

While there will likely be more producers who decide to capitalize on the demand for local foods, there are several that were already in the business before the pandemic. The Riley County Livestock Association (RCLA) will tour one of those businesses – Pacheco Beef in Alma – during their summer tour on Sunday, August 29.

Pacheco Beef produces, feeds, and markets their own beef through an online store and also through a retail store in Alma. Their business is a family operation that focuses on the farm to plate concept. You can check out their website at <https://www.shoppachecobeef.com>.

RCLA Summer Tour participants will gather at the Pacheco Beef storefront, located at 607 Missouri Avenue in Alma, at 5:00 p.m. on August 29 for a tour scheduled for 5:15. The Pachecos will discuss their operation, including the feeding process, marketing strategy, and products available.

The tour will conclude with a picnic, provided by the Riley County Livestock Association. Participants are asked to bring their own lawn chairs to use during the picnic.

Reservations to attend the RCLA Summer Tour can be made online at [www.riley.ksu.edu](http://www.riley.ksu.edu), or by calling the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. There is no charge to attend, but reservations are needed by August 26.

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to [gmclure@ksu.edu](mailto:gmclure@ksu.edu).

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