

News Column

by Greg McClure, KSU-Riley County Extension Agriculture Agent
110 Courthouse Plaza
Manhattan, KS 66502

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Phone: 785/537-6350
Fax: 785/537-6353

WHAT'S IN YOUR FREEZER?

“Is this Wilbur?” asked my sometimes-sweet, sometimes-sassy, red-haired daughter.

We were having a nice meal together as a family – something that doesn't happen nearly often enough anymore – and the cured pork chops were beyond good that evening. Pam had incorporated the meat into a casserole, but I caught the girl who doesn't like crock pot meat chowing down on the extra meat on the counter before supper. It was that good!

The policy in our house since the kids were little was to NOT name anything that might end up in our own freezer. Unfortunately, Wilbur got named before I told Ryan it didn't make sense to sell his pig for 40 cents per pound at the fair, and then buy one for 50 to 55 cents per pound to put in our freezer.

That was three years ago and the pork from that year is long gone. Although hog prices are higher this year, we still plan to put three hogs in our freezer like we did last year. Our family will shrink again, with two more headed off to college, but the youngest is still growing and can hold his own at the dinner table.

The average person in the U.S. consumes 50-60 pounds of pork per year. Per capita U.S. consumption of all red meats (beef, pork and lamb) totals 110 pounds annually. Since there is no beef in our freezer and we only put one lamb in last year, I'll figure 100 pounds of pork consumed per person in our house.

I know my method of estimating how much pork my family might consume next year is

flawed because we probably aren't average and I don't even know how many people we will be feeding. Still, I'll take the 100 pounds per person number times four and figure we will go through 400 pounds of pork in the next 12 months.

A quick look at past consumption suggests my estimate might be pretty close for our family. If we consumed three hogs last year and they each yielded 150 pounds of pork, that would have been 450 pounds of pork for our family.

Those who hate math probably already checked out on me, but for those still reading, there is a reason I'm going through this example. You see, instead of shipping hogs off to a far-away packer, we now market all of the Riley County Fair 4-H hogs locally, one at a time.

My thought is this — if you know how much pork you will get from a hog, and you know how much you might consume in a year's time, then you might be interested in buying a hog to put in your own freezer.

If you buy a hog from the county fair, you can expect to take home 125 to 150 pounds of pork, depending on the live weight of the hog. If you are average consumers – and you don't eat out all the time – two people should be able to through that much pork in a year.

Hogs from the county fair are processed locally, either in Riley or in Clay Center, and we provide the transportation to the processor. All the consumer needs to do is to tell the processor what cuts to make, then pick up the pork when it is ready.

The cost will vary, depending upon the weight of the hog, and how much processing is required. Curing hams, seasoning sausage, and making links or patties will cost more than just making roasts, chops, and ground pork. Roughly though, the cost will be about \$225 for the hog and \$200 for processing. One check will be made to the 4-H member and another check to the processor.

County fair hogs will be available on a first come, first served basis. We have started a list and will distribute hogs to buyers in the order that requests are made. If you'd like to get your name near the top of the list, to guarantee we will have a hog for you, call soon.

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 gmcclore@ksu.edu.

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