



# Direct Marketing: *How to Market the Meat From Your Livestock*

by Dr. Gregg Rentfrow

**T**he local food movement has become more and more popular over the last few years. Livestock farmers want to take advantage of the popularity, but may not know how to begin or how to sell meat legally. Here a few tips to marketing the meat from your farm's livestock.

1) The Federal Meat Inspection Act of 1906 mandated that all meats intended for interstate commerce be inspected by the government. Basically, all meats have to be inspected by the USDA before retail sale. There are no exemptions for number of animals, size of the farm, or sales location; all meat and meat products have to be inspected by the USDA – Food Safety and Inspection Service to be sold legally. In addition, the farmer needs to communicate with the meat processor that he intends to sell at local farmer's markets and/or roadside stands. This will help the meat processor properly label the packages, including the inspection legend and possibly safe handling labels. The farmer should consider only selling at registered farmer's markets and/or roadside stands. State Departments of Agriculture have strict rules and

regulations that all entrepreneurs must follow in order to sell at farmer's markets and roadside stands, to further insure safety and legality. You can locate your state Department of Agriculture from <http://www.rma.usda.gov/other/stateag.html>. Those direct marketers not wanting to limit themselves to farmers markets, but also want to sell from the farm need to contact the local health department. Some counties may require additional legal paperwork. Ignorance of the law is no excuse.

2) The direct marketer, regardless of what product they intend to sell, needs at least \$500,000 of liability insurance. Hopefully this will help protect your farm and your family.

3) Today's consumers have more disposable income to spend on a wider variety of foods than ever before and are willing to pay a premium for local meats. However, they may not be willing to pay a premium for less desirable cuts of meat, such as roasts or ground products. Direct marketers should consider selling bundles of meat that contain a few of the more desirable cuts such as a few roast and a few pounds of ground



KY Lamb selling lamb at the Lexington Farmer's Market.

product. For example, a \$25 bundle may contain two steaks/chops, two roasts, and 2 lbs of ground product. Bundles will help prevent a surplus of less desirable cuts of meat.

4) Packaging is often overlooked but could be what makes or breaks the success of a direct marketer. The consumer will expect the meat to taste as good today as when they put it in the freezer six months ago. Freezer burn is characterized by the formation of ice crystals, causing the

meat's surface to dehydrate. Freezer burned meat is not harmful to human health, but will have extreme off-flavors. Vacuum packaging will help maintain product quality in the freezer, as the tight seal will prevent air from reaching the surface. The extra costs of vacuum packaging will pay in the long run as your product is only as good as the last time it was consumed.

5) Direct marketing meat from your farm's livestock is an excellent way to promote the family farm along with highlighting the excellent products made in Kentucky. Please contact me (gregg.rentfrow@uky.edu) or the University of Kentucky's Food Systems Innovation Center (fsic@uky.edu) for help in promoting your farms products.

**Dr. Gregg Rentfrow, Ph.D.** is an Associate Extension Professor at the University of Kentucky. His marquee extension programs are the UK Meat Cutting School, the Food Systems Innovation Center, and the 4-H Country Ham Project. Dr. Rentfrow has over 25 years' experience in the meats industry.

# The University of Kentucky Food Systems Innovation Center

The University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture Food Systems Innovation Center, is a multi-disciplinary program designed to aid Kentuckians in developing healthy, profitable, safe, and legal food products, as well as evaluate potential markets for these products. The UK Food Systems Innovation Center is managed by the Department of Animal and Food Sciences, with aid from the Department of Agricultural Economics, Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering, and Horticulture.

Family farms in Kentucky have increasingly looked for opportunities to grow products for processing and consumption within the state or to actually process products themselves. The FSIC provides cost effective options for local food processors and marketers working toward profitable commercialization of their products. This program includes technical support in the way of science-based food processing strategies and



technologies, food safety implementation, and consumer marketing research for product design and placement, as well as overall business improvement strategies. The University of Kentucky has assisted over 500 new family farm-based food producers in product development, safety, and marketing in the past year. The UK Food Systems Innovation Center seeks to provide services to a wider variety of processed products and to work with clients across the state. If you have any questions please consult the Food Systems Innovation Center at: [www.uky.edu/fsic/](http://www.uky.edu/fsic/) or [fsic@uky.edu](mailto:fsic@uky.edu).



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