

Beef Frequently Asked Questions:

How much packaged beef is in a ¼?

Typically about 90 lbs. But depending upon the size, between 80 and 105 lbs.

How much freezer space will a ¼ take?

Frozen beef can be packed 30 to 35 lb per cubic foot. A ¼ beef will need about 3 CF of freezer space. It will come from the butcher in about 2 and half card board boxes.

How much will a ¼ beef cost?

The short answer it will be about \$775: \$132 will go to West Gardiner Beef and \$643 to Intervale Farm.

The long answer follows...

There are three weights to a beef animal. The “live weight” is the animal weight just before slaughter. This weight is not usually measured for freezer beef sold direct from farmer to the customer. Live weight is measured by the truck load for beef sold to processing plants that sell to grocery stores.

The next weight is the “hanging” weight. This is the weight that the butcher gives us after the animal has been taken to the butcher shop to hang. The weight difference from live to hanging is from loss of blood, head, hide, hooves, viscera, lungs and heart. The hanging weight is usually about 60% of the live weight.

The last weight is the “final” or “take-home” weight. This is the weight of the meat that each customer will bring home. This weight is usually about 60-65% of the hanging weight. The weight is lost in 2 ways. About 4% is water weight lost during the 10-14 day period that the carcass is hung (or “cured”). Then about another 30-35% is lost during the cutting process. This amount is variable based on 2 factors – one is the amount of fat on the meat and how much the customer wants left on the cuts, and the other is the cuts that a customer requests. A customer requesting the cuts be trimmed to less fat will have a higher loss. Our grass-fed beef animals are lower fat in fat, so less weight is lost from fat trimmings. The total loss tends to be closer to 35%. Also, the more boneless cuts requested by the customer, the lower the final weight. A customer wanting ground chuck will have a lower take-home weight than one wanting a chuck roast or chuck steak both of which include bone. (Note that the lower weight doesn’t mean that you are receiving less meat – rather, you are receiving fewer bones).

A 1,100 lb live weight animal will produce a hanging weight carcass of about 600 lb. The price is based on the hanging weight. The customer takes ownership when the carcass is placed on the hook to be hung (cured). The take home weight from a whole will be about 60 to 65% of the hanging weight or 360 to 390 lbs. A hanging quarter will be about 150 lbs. Take home meat from a quarter will be about 90 to 97 lbs.

There are three fees in purchasing freezer beef that are applied to the hanging weight. The slaughter facility charges \$80 per animal. Applied to a quarter, that is \$20 or about \$0.13/lb hanging. The butcher

fee to cut and wrap the meat per your directions (communicated through the cut sheet) is \$0.78/lb hanging weight. For a ¼ that will be about \$117. For the beef itself to be raised and to maintain its cow from time of conception to birth which is 9 months, and then to maintain both until the calve weans at 6 to 7 months and then to raise the animal an additional 12 to 13 months all the time consuming hay or grass cost \$4.50 per lb. So the total cost is about \$5.40 per lb hanging weight, or about \$8.57 per lb take home weight.

How much of the different kinds of cuts of beef will we receive?

That depends upon your desires. First if you purchase a ¼ we team you up with someone who has similar desires but some flexibility in what you get is required.

The cut sheet allows you to direct the butcher to make more or less hamburger. Some people want chuck cuts to be made into ground chuck. Others want chuck steak or chuck roast. Some people want brisket made into burger, others want steak.

Following is a common breakdown of a ¼ beef... Total weight depends upon the animal size and cut distribution based on the animal's composition. Our cattle are all beef cattle a special selection cross of Simmental x Angus and some Herford. The exact amount varies from animal to animal depending upon the bull and cow. The bulls are changed out every 18-months to prevent in-breeding. A dairy animal will have much more hamburger, and fewer steaks than the following list and its meat will be leaner with less marbling, and a lower take home percentage compared to beef cattle (more bone less beef).

Following is a sample side of beef with a 300-lb hanging weight.

Hanging Side Weight lbs	300	300
Take home weight from Hanging	1/2	1/4
Cut	lbs	lbs
London Broil	5	2.5
Chuck Roast or Steaks	14	7
Rib Eye	8.5	4
Tenderloin	2	1
Loin Steaks: porterhouse, T-bone, club, about 20 total 1-inch steaks	13	6.5
NY Sirloin steaks	4	2
Shortcut Steaks	4	2
Bottom Round Roasts	7	3.5
Eye of the Round or minute steaks	7	3.5
Top Round Roast (Roast or Steaks or combo)	10.5	5
Short Ribs	7	3.5
Face Rump	8	4
Stew Meat	20	10
Hamburg	70	35
Total Take Home	180	89.5

What do I do with the cut sheet?

The sheet is a means to communicate how you desire the beef to be cut and packaged for you.

Unlike a grocery store, since you are buying a hanging beef, you get to request to the butcher how you want it cut and packaged.

First if you order a ¼ you will have to have some flexibility. Cattle don't come in quarters. They come in halves so the butcher blends up a half to make two quarters. We try to pair people ordering quarters with others that have similar desires but some flexibility is required. If you order a half, you control everything and get to have it all your way.

Important things to communicate on the cut sheet follow:

How many people are in your family? How many steaks do you want in a package?

What is your desired steak thickness?

Do you want your chuck cuts made into ground chuck, or chuck steak, or chuck roasts? Or, a blend of the three?

What size roasts do you want?

Do you want more stew meat, or less and more hamburger?

Do you want more hamburger (i.e. less cuts of steak or roasts)?

What fat content do you want in your hamburger? The butcher trims fat from the carcass. If you like a lot of fat in your burgers they will add the amount you want 95% lean, 90% lean, 85% lean, 80% lean, etc.

Grass fed beef is naturally lean, some fat from the carcass is usually added to burger so the burger will hold together when grilled. But, if you want a really lean burger with no plans to make hamburger patties, you can get have it very lean with no added fat.

How much fat do you want left on your roasts or steaks? Some people want to leave a lot, other people want the fat trimmed. I personally like the fat trimmed. I don't eat it and can result in flare up fires on the grill so I like a tight fat trim.

What do some items on the sheet such as stew meat mean on the list?

Basically if you want it or not. If you answer no, they make more hamburger. If you answer yes they will make their standard amount. If you answer yes lots, they convert chuck roasts into stew meat, if you write no on the chuck roasts.

Soup bones, do you want them or not? The same for dog bones.

Once the cattle are slaughtered they hang for 10 to 14 days for the meat to age. We like to have all the cuts sheets completed by the time of slaughter so we pass them as a group to Lisa at West Gardiner Beef. She is not going to be responsive to your questions prior to that because she is busy dealing with customers who are having their cattle processed now not days or weeks in the future. After the beef are hung on the hook, Lisa will turn her attention to your questions. We (Intervale Farm) with Lisa team up people requesting quarters with similar quarter requests. Lisa makes adjustments to the cut sheets as needed to accommodate the ¼ requests as best as she can. We also match up cattle, by their ear tag number, to specific customers. Unless, you previously requested your beef come from a particular head of beef. Then that is the beef you get. The whole beef carcass is weighed, recorded and then sawed down the middle into two equal halves. That hanging weight is used to calculate the processing fee to West Gardiner and the beef fee to Intervale Farm for each customer.

Liver, tongue, oxtail, heart, kidneys are not part of the side. If you want liver and kidneys you can certainly have them for free. There is a lot of liver in a head of beef, 16 to 20 lbs each. The liver that customers don't want is given to the Somalis in Lewiston or to Hope Haven food kitchen in Lewiston.

If you want a heart you can probably have a heart depending upon demand. Though, I eat them. They are not my first choice from the freezer. Heart is a muscle that works all the time and is tough.

The tongue and oxtail are delicacies that are sought after. If you want those we will need to make arrangements.