

No more mystery steaks

Meat cutting course returns to the Agricultural Campus

Meat cutting short courses are returning to the Maritimes thanks to concerted efforts of Dalhousie University (Agriculture) Extended Learning staff led by Program Manager Ashley Coffin.

Can't wait. Opened a package of our own beef marked "strip loin" to throw on the grill this past weekend and yes, it was a steak, and a strip of something, but it never was close to the loin. Very discouraging.

Extended Learning has had an on-line survey since early summer asking for expressions of interest in a meat-cutting course. Coffin says it will be up until the middle of September. Already, however, response has been such that plans are moving ahead to make it all happen.

To learn more, we emailed several questions to the Program Manager, to which she promptly replied. The exchange follows.

ABS: How many survey responses so far?

AC: There are 80 responses from the survey thus far.

ABS: What has been the background/ interest of those responding—e.g. owners or workers in provincially licensed facilities; stores; simply wanting instruction, perhaps for the home farm?

AC: Our target audience that we have been circulating the survey to include owner/operators and employees of full- and part-time farms, abattoirs, processors, specialty meat shops, and retail. Most of the responses are from full- and part-time farms and custom meat cutting shops.

ABS: Where are respondents from (provinces)?

AC: Respondents are from all over the Atlantic provinces, with most being from N.S.

ABS: What are most respondents interested in?

AC: Red meat cutting basics was the top interest of respondents.

ABS: And secondly (in interest)?

AC: Meat processing came in second.

ABS: Have you been able to work out costs?

AC: Costs are still in the works.

ABS: What's next?

AC: Next comes setting up the course(s). It was clear from the participants that were surveyed that a series of short courses/workshops was the best length of training that suited their needs. The series of short courses/workshops focus on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes participants need for success in creating quality meat cuts and value-added products.



Charolais belonging to DeLong Farms enjoy a late summer graze on pastures northeast of New Germany, N.S. (ABS photo)

Print and electronic resources will help participants after the course and provide additional resources in areas where they want to learn more. Key features of the course and resources include:

- A format (e.g. short courses, electronic resources) and time frame that enables industry participation;
- An integration of regulatory requirements and best practices in food safety and product quality;
- Integrating best practices in marketing and customer service;
- Additional training in business skills and product innovation.

ABS: When can we expect to see the first course offered?

AC: We are working on a proposal and are optimistic that it will be funded. However, the funding will not cover all costs and to ensure sustainability all courses will be offered on a fee basis. Initially we thought a fall course might be possible; however a course in 2016 is looking more reasonable at this time. We are waiting to hear on funding, then we can start moving the process forward.

Our thanks to Ashley Coffin and staff for pushing ahead with this vitally important initiative, especially as "Buy Local" marketing and direct sales of meats continue to gain momentum. DvL

The meat course opinion survey, active through mid-September, can be found at <https://surveys.dal.ca/opinion/s?s=28441>.



Atlantic Beef & Sheep Affiliates

For information on becoming a member of any of these groups contact the club at the address shown:

- South Shore Cattlemen's Association**
Contact: Boyd Crouse, Sec/Treas.
RR 3 Lunenburg, NS B0J 2C0 902-634-3468
- PEI Hereford Breeders Club**
Contact: Paula Fay Matheson
1721 Strathcona Road
RR3 St. Peters, PE COA 2A0
bpmatheson@pei.sympatico.ca
- Maritime Aberdeen-Angus Association**
Contact: Betty Lou Scott
RR 1 Salt Springs, NS B0K 1P0 902-925-2057
- Maritime Salers Association**
Contact: Steve Parrish
RR 1 Waterville, Kings County, NS B0P 1V0
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