

## FARM-TO-FREEZER LAMB

### How It Works

At our farm we use a mobile butcher who travels to our property with their equipment and a refrigerated truck to dispatch the animals. This causes the least stress on the lambs as they do not have to be loaded into a vehicle, transported or stay in an unfamiliar place before slaughter. We are currently working with Connor Holland, he grew up in the industry. He is efficient and compassionate and also a super nice guy.

In order to sell to stores or restaurants, USDA processing is required. The closest USDA plant is in Springfield, we tried this once but weren't happy with how the lambs were handled. So technically we are selling you a lamb before it has been processed and we don't touch it once it leaves our farm.

Once slaughtered and dressed the carcass is lifted into a refrigerated truck and brought to a butcher shop for cut & wrap. In some places cut & wrap is charged by the pound, but here in Southern Oregon we pay a flat fee no matter the size of the lamb. The butcher shop weighs the dressed lambs for us when they arrive at the shop. This hanging weight is the basis for the per pound cost to consumer.

Hanging weight is about 45% of live weight for lamb. Finished weight is a few pounds less than hanging weight due to air drying and some loss in the cut and wrap process.

The butcher hangs the carcass to air dry and cure for a few days, then they cut and wrap according to customer instructions. We generally order standard cuts where everyone gets the same thing. We include organs, bones, stew, ground, chops, steaks, rack, ribs, roasts and shanks. If you have very specific wishes we ask an additional fee for the work of communicating that to the butcher shop.

In most cases the customer then picks up the lamb directly from the butcher. For Bay Area customers, I pick up the finished lambs, pack them into coolers and drive them to a central point for pick up. Thus far I have not officially charged any delivery fee, but relied on your sliding scale generosity/donations at delivery to cover the cost of gas and my time

### Glossary

*Live Weight* ~ This is the weight of the animal before slaughter. Some farmers sell based on live weight. This cost is usually about half the cost of selling based on hanging weight.

*Hanging weight*, also called *carcass weight* ~ This is the weight of the animal with the head, skin, organs and forelegs removed before it is broken down into cuts.

*Finished Weight* ~ Finished weight is the weight of all the cuts combined once cut, wrapped and frozen. Because of air drying and some waste during the cut & wrap process, the finished weight is generally 5-10% less than the hanging weight.

*USDA* ~ To officially sell meat to the public it must be processed in a USDA certified plant. This raises the cost a few cents per pound and there are only a few plants available in each state as the cost to become certified is substantial. The closest USDA plant to our farm is 2.5 hours away. To get around the need to go through a USDA plant some farmers sell the live animal to the customer and technically should not touch the meat once it has been slaughtered. I rely on the good will of my customers and the assumption you would prefer not to have the animals stressed.

It is legal to slaughter animals for personal consumption on your own farm, but not for sale to the public. For us to slaughter and butcher ourselves and give to the customer would only be legal if the customer came to the farm and participated in the process with their own animal.

*Dress* ~ This refers to skinning and removing the organs (edible) and offal (inedible).

*Cut & Wrap* ~ This is the process of breaking down the carcass into cuts and packaging or wrapping it. Some larger plants offer a vacuum sealed product for more money, smaller butchers usually use a plastic sheet and butcher paper around the meat. Either should be sufficient to keep the meat in good shape in the freezer until consumed. The recommended shelf life for fresh frozen meat is 1 year from cut & wrap, however I have eaten meat frozen up to 3 years and it was still delicious.

I hope this has answered some of your questions on the process.