

Beef from Cow and Calf Plan Operations Has Possibilities, Research Work Shows

With price concessions, consumers indicate they would take large quantities of "baby beef"

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Consumers' taste in beef can change rapidly. For example, beef produced from heavy milk-fed calves weighing from 450 to 650 pounds sold readily at prices equal to the more mature beef during World War II. However, such beef sold only at a distinct discount when meat became more plentiful after the war. Many recent studies have shown that the demand has changed from highly finished or prime beef cuts to the leaner cuts.

The lower price received by producers for the milk-fat calf was a blow to many Kentucky farmers who had shifted to the "cow and calf" plan of beef production during and following World War II. The grass economy on most Kentucky farms, with a shortage of concentrate feeds, is admirably suited to the "cow and calf" plan of beef production. The carcass from such a milk-fat calf, which usually grades high, good,

or choice, does not have so much marbling or the deep red color of choice mature beef. Because of this, often it does not fit the present beef grade standards and is graded "heavy-calf" instead of beef.

Many retail stores which handled beef from the "cow and calf" plan of beef production have discontinued its sale. Many store operators say that buyers complained that the meat was tasteless, tough, and dry and, consequently, were not repeat buyers. Meat market operators also said the beef from the milk-fat calf was strictly a seasonal product as it was available only during the fall months. Because of these reasons, many stores have not handled this beef in recent years.

At the University of Kentucky, "palatability panels" were conducted in an endeavor to find out just how satisfactory such beef is in comparison with more mature beef. Flavor, tenderness, and juiciness of meat produced from 400 to 475, 500 to 575, and 600 to 700 pound milk-fat calves were compared with beef from a 1,000 pound fed steer of similar grade. These tests did not prove conclusively that one was more acceptable to the "panel" members than the others in the



Grade beef cows and their calves raised on the Kentucky Cow and Calf Plan in Woodford county. These choice

calves, without creep feeding, averaged over 650 pounds at market time.