

My name is Todd Gregory, my wife and I own and operate the Willowcreek Store and Cafe north of Vale, Oregon. The nature of our business, of course, is dependent on several meat types. Beef is our most widely sought after meat. We utilize locally grown beef as much as possible but there are many obstacles that prevent us from using more locally grown beef. The following is a list of those obstacles.

- Current regulations require us to use USDA inspected meat. While this is understandable and definitely for safety reasons, it limits the sources available for us to have local beef slaughtered for use in the restaurant.
- Backlog with waiting times up to a year to get beef into a slaughter facility makes it difficult to get locally grown beef inspected and slaughtered in a timely manner.
- Any local beef we use has to be transported to Idaho in order to be slaughtered in a USDA facility. This increases transport costs and increases the cost per pound due to fuel costs.
- We utilize a higher volume of certain cuts for jerky production and steaks. Due to the limitation of the number of those cuts per carcass, we are forced to purchase supplemental primal cuts from retail which increases the cost per pound. These purchases are not from local sources and are generally from larger retail outlets like US Chef Store or other food service suppliers. A local slaughter facility with USDA inspection and retail capability would drastically increase the amount of locally grown beef we use as well as reduce costs that can be passed on to the consumer.
- A local USDA slaughter facility would promote more relationships between local ranchers and our small business. There would be more direct communication between us and the local producer as we purchase animals for our use.

These are some of the challenges the small local businesses face that inhibit our ability to utilize the local beef being raised in our “backyard”. It is understood that we are a small business and that we don’t require the volume of beef on a large scale. With a local facility we could utilize three beef a month. This would help the local producers in our area. The ability to supplement our need for specific cuts by utilizing locally raised beef would also be a benefit to local producers.

We are in the process of expanding our jerky production capability. If this goes as planned, it will significantly increase our need for specific primals like top round. We are predicting that our needs would increase to about 500 lbs of top round per week. If we could purchase these increases from slaughter facilities that deal with local beef producers then it is a win win.

I am not sure if this information is helpful in the overall conversation but this is the situation for small rural businesses like ours. I would assume there are others that consistently deal with some of the issues I have listed and who would buy locally raised beef if able.

Thanks for listening
Respectfully,
Todd Gregory