

2019 Meat Producer Survey Result Summary

77 Respondents – 63 currently derive income from the sale of red meat, 14 do not currently but may in the future

Responses by county:

Clallam – 13
Island – 2
Jefferson – 13
King – 15
Kitsap – 18
Kittitas – 1
Mason – 1
Pierce – 6
San Juan – 4
Skagit – 2
Snohomish – 1
Thurston – 1

Of those not currently producing red meat for sale, the following reasons were cited:

USDA processing not close enough – 8
Currently working another job – 4
Not profitable – 2
Lack access to farmland – 1
Regulations too prohibitive – 1

Of the 63 active producers:

31 produce beef
36 produce pork
27 produce lamb
14 produce goat
2 produce bison or yak

30 produce 1 type of red meat
22 produce 2 types of red meat
8 produce 3 types of red meat
3 produce 4 types of red meat

This survey did not include the production of poultry or rabbit

26 currently use USDA-inspected slaughter and processing services
26 do not currently use USDA-inspected slaughter and processing services
11 have used USDA-inspected slaughter and processing services in the past but do not currently

Of the 26 producers that currently use USDA-inspected slaughter services, the following services are used:

Island Grown Farmers Cooperative – 8
Malco's Buxton Meats – 6
North Cascade Meats – 2
Puget Sound Processors – 10
Smokey Ridge Meats – 1
LPCA – 1
Mount Angel Meat Company – 1

Of the 26 producers that currently use USDA-inspected slaughter services:

6 are satisfied with their current USDA-inspected slaughter services
15 are partly satisfied
5 are not satisfied
81% are not fully satisfied with service

The following issues were cited as sources of dissatisfaction:

Not close enough – 15 – 58% of respondents
Scheduling is difficult – 15 – 58% of respondents
Too expensive – 7 – 27% of respondents

Other comments about dissatisfaction:

- Not enough capacity
- With the distance we try to clump our animals making it harder to manage the quantities of meat in our storage
- Lack of pig scalding option. No good options for changing slaughter services if we are unsatisfied
- Constant issues with making sure we get all our product back, proper labeling, getting all our questions answers to our satisfaction and more.
- In order for you to use any processor other than Heritage Meats you have to pay an arm and a leg!!
- Reliability. Would like the slaughter to be connected with the processor for a more seamless operation.
- We cannot get all parts of the animals back, which are of high value to us as a small farm. For example, bones (all customers), sheep heads (Muslim market), hooves (pet food market), organ meats (all customers). These are all products that customers have requested of us, that we personally would like to have, and that we can use as foods for other areas of our farm. It is infuriating that we cannot have the animals that we raised and are paying to have this service done on for our use.
- Would like to have access to pig scalding facility.
- We are limited by space and aging equipment. There is a huge need for expanded services such as smoking, curing, ready to eat, and retail sales.
- the manner in which the animals are handled after slaughter, no scalding, basic butchery.
- The price is twice as high as Oregon. PSP only operates a few days a month. Ridiculously difficult to get on the schedule. This public asset, the MPU, is way underutilized. That hurts our area meat farmers. PSP should have improved with their new location but they only operated four

days in the month of May. Not okay. Not reliable. I have lost restaurant customers due to their concerns about my supply. I have to harvest my animals below or above weight because I simply cannot get an appointment for kill. Puget Sound Processing does not have a scalding. I lose customers if I need skin on pork or I have to go to Oregon.

Of the producers who do produce red meat for sale, but do not sell USDA-inspected meat, the following reasons were cited:

USDA slaughter services not close enough – 26
Prefer not to transport livestock – 18
Too expensive – 20
Not interested in USDA-inspected sales – 2
Don't know about available USDA slaughter services – 4

Other comments:

- Lost storage capacity
- No trailer
- Hasn't been an easily available option
- Too expensive to be worth it. The higher cost of transportation, slaughter, and cut and wrap can't be justified at our scale. Hamburger for example requires \$3 per lb in expenses per lb of meat yielded from the process. As a rough comparison I can process through on the hoof sales at around a \$120 slaughter fee and a \$.60/lb cut and wrap putting fees at less than half of the USDA and with less hauling expense. Around the low \$1/lb range on the meat yield. This pushes more farmers into skirting regulations and selling 'on the hoof' weather by the whole, half, or quarter animal
- Pierce Co Conservation District funded Mobile Slaughter Unit provided some early support has become primarily privatized and stationary. Mixed management had mixed results and quality. Also need access that supports animal welfare and slaughter.

If a new USDA-inspected slaughter service were available:

58 would consider using it
15 might consider using it
2 would not consider using it

Of the 73 respondents who would/might consider using a new USDA-inspected slaughter service, 24 are currently using USDA-inspected processing services.

In 2018 these 24 respondents produced:

- 185 USDA-processed beef
- 324 USDA-processed hogs
- 230 USDA-processed sheep
- 59 USDA-processed goats

On the Olympic & Kitsap Peninsulas:

- 140 USDA-processed beef
- 242 USDA-processed hogs
- 29 USDA-processed sheep

- 34 USDA-processed goats

(Assuming all these animals went to a new processor, and processing capacity of 8 beef, 20 hogs, and 30 sheep/goats per day, this is 32 days of processing per year, or 2.67 days per month. This does not consider seasonal variations)

These Olympic/Kitsap producers are willing to travel:

- Up to 25 miles – 1 producer
- Up to 50 miles – 4 producers
- Up to 75 miles – 1 producer
- Up to 100 miles – 3 producers
- More than 100 miles – 3 producers

The following were listed as conditions to use a new USDA-inspected slaughter service:

If it were closer to my farm – 11

If pricing was competitive – 11

If scheduling was easy – 6

Other comments:

- If I could rent a trailer or arrange transport
- If I felt good about the animal and carcass handling
- If it came to my farm.
- If they adopted more progressive technique
- If we can keep all animal parts.
- The slaughter service needs to be near or deliver to a USDA inspected butcher shop that does pork well.

If a new USDA-inspected slaughter service were available, producers would be willing to travel:

Not willing to transport, slaughter must happen on farm – 17

Up to 25 miles – 26

Up to 50 miles – 17

Up to 75 miles – 5

Up to 100 miles – 5

Over 100 miles – 3

The following number of animals were processed in 2018 under Custom Exempt:

Beef – 132 by 23 producers

Hogs – 231 by 27 producers

Sheep – 245 by 17 producers

Goats – 57 by 8 producers

Bison/Yak – 0

The following number of animals were processed in 2018 under USDA inspection:

Beef – 185 by 10 producers
Hogs – 324 by 11 producers
Sheep – 251 by 8 producers
Goats – 74 by 5 producers
Bison/Yak – 0

20 Producers indicated that they currently transport animals to a USDA-inspected slaughter facility, and they travel an average of 120 miles one-way.

Producers use the following USDA-inspected processing facilities:

Del Fox Meats – 2
Island Grown Farmers Cooperative – 7
Heritage Meats – 12
Malco's Buxton Meats – 5
Minder Meats – 2
Smokey Ridge – 1
LPCA – 1

Producers travel an average of 110 miles one-way to a USDA-inspected slaughter facility.

Of the 24 producers who currently use USDA-inspected processing services:

13 are satisfied
9 are partially satisfied
2 are not satisfied

54% of respondents are satisfied with their USDA-inspected processing services
46% of respondents are not fully satisfied with their USDA-inspected processing services

The following issues were cited as sources of dissatisfaction:

Not close enough – 9
Scheduling is difficult – 7
Too expensive – 5

Other comments about dissatisfaction:

- Butcher on property
- Cut and wrap very expensive. They don't offer much in the way of curing. Excellent top management and customer service keeps me going there however.
- Didn't know
- Difficult to communicate with office staff as a result lots of problems getting all our meat back, labeling mistakes, ingredients issues and more. Would like more autonomy with our products as well as a better and more direct relationship with butcher to help us get cuts we want and need.
- Does not come to my farm so I have never checked for affordability.
- Does not exist here!

- don't want my animals waiting in some pen somewhere for days.
- I am unsatisfied with current services.
- I can't comment on scheduling as we gave up in dealing with it about 3 years ago. As mentioned in another questions response we've found it easier to sell 'custom'. If the associated expenses were cheaper we would consider more USDA cut and wrap but when the cost of compliance increases it pushes more people toward custom cut and wrap. This seems contradictory to the intention of increasing public health and safety with the USDA cut and wrap protocols
- I want all of my animal returned to me. I only get half my kidneys or livers and I really want my pelts back on my lamb.
- Inconsistent cut quality and packaging, cut instructions not always followed.
- Inconsistent management in past. High cost and limited options for post slaughter processing.
- Is there one in Clallam County?
- Lack of information on location, and prices without looking really far into it.
- Lack of respect for animals during slaughter process
- Not attached enough with slaughter.
- Not cost effective for the small number of livestock I can produce on my property.
- Processors have limited need to work with clients' special request.
- Quality issues
 - Missing boxes of meat, etc.
 - Mislabeling of meat
 - Lack of smoked meat options
- They misinterpret orders. I asked to have all the caul and leaf fat packaged separately, but they ground it into the sausage make really fatty sausage.
- Transporting live animals is challenging for us
- We can't keep all parts of the animals and it is stressful for the animals to travel so far.
- Where is it?

29 respondents indicated that they do not currently use USDA-inspected processing services, but would be interested in doing so.

- Of these 29 respondents, 25 cited distance to processing as the reason they do not use existing services, 15 cited high costs of services, 2 did not know about available services, and 1 felt regulations were too cumbersome.
- Of the 25 respondents indicating distance to services were a barrier:
 - o 8 would not transport livestock off farm, slaughter would need to happen on farm
 - o 13 would transport up to 25 miles
 - o 3 would transport up to 50 miles
 - o 1 would transport up to 75 miles

43 of 59 respondents indicated they planned to increase production in the next 5 years, 15 would maintain current production, and 1 would decrease production.

- 18 producers plan to increase by 1-25%
- 15 producers plan to increase by 26-50%
- 1 producer plan to increase by 51-75%
- 6 producers plan to increase by 76-100%
- 3 producers plan to increase by more than 100%
- 15 producers plan to maintain current production

- 1 producer plans to decrease by 1-25%

On a scale of 1-5, with 5 being of high importance, respondents indicated the following average values for factors influencing their plans to expand USDA-inspected animal processing:

- Access to USDA-inspected slaughter and processing services – 4.5
- Access to farmland – 3
- Market Development – 3.2
- Labor – 2.9
- Aging – 2.4

7 of 71 respondents are currently a member of a cooperatively-owned meat processing business.

Of the 64 respondents who are not currently members of a cooperatively-owned meat processing business:

- 35 would be interested in joining
- 27 would consider it
- 2 would not consider it

Comments of those who would consider it:

- Yes, if cost effective given low volume of use (15-20 pigs/yr?)
- Rather see a private for profit USDA plant
- Hard to pull off successfully
- Depends on location, what all is included and how much it cost for founding membership and how long it will take from initial start investment until it is up and running.
- Depends on being able to spread the costs across the limited number of animals I process in a year
- It depends on operational and labor costs in addition to quality of variety of 'products' that could be produced.
Is the slaughter site mobile? Is the processing facility mobile? or easy transportable?
- Would need more info
- Yes, but only if our meat is able to retain our brand name on the label.
- The concerns are farmers being board members and not necessarily thinking of it as a business. Burn out too.
- The last time I heard of this, the cost of buy in was prohibitive
- It would depend on the price. I have seen some that are too expensive for me as a small farm.
- Would depend on the rules, costs and benefits
- Previous efforts to do exactly that have not been successful. Puget Sound Meat Producers Coop for example. I suggest privatizing to allow it to be run and operated consistently as a business and to build a base for future competitors. We need to revitalize the meat infrastructure to include slaughter, cut and wrap, post processing and marketing. That is how we get consistent products and production.
- We were members of PSMPC and while we like the co-op model in theory (and have seen it work in other locations obviously) we would want assurances that any new venture would not have the same problems that PSMPC did.
- Tried that and it was a mess IMO. Not likely going there again.
- If well managed
- I'm 62. By the time one of these springs up, I may be ready to retire.
- the mobile didn't seem to work very well but a regular location might be better

Additional survey comments:

- Having easier access to USDA processing would open up a lot more potential business than Custom/Exempt which is what I'm currently limited to (just not worth the drive to take one or two animals all the way to Chehalis!)
- Legislation "MUST" be changed so WSDA or County inspectors can be used.
- something is badly needed!
THANKS!
- USDA poultry processing is desperately needed as well, not just large animals
- We grow organically, but are not certified. Clean meat is important to us, so organic harvest and processing needs to be an option or we won't use the service. No citric acid dips ect. And humane harvest is also necessary. We raise our animals with respect and humanity and need that to be a part of their last moments. Same day cull, no feed lot.
- We produce an additional 100 head of pigs that we end up selling live partially due to lack of USDA slaughter options in our area. I have visited with beef ranchers who pool their calves and ship to toppenish, WA for sale at auction. More of these animals could be sold directly to consumers here in Clallam County if we had additional capacity. The USDA and Custom processors are overbooked fall early winter.
- We would like to help and/or be involved in bringing more efficient USDA processing to the area
- You need to include natural conditions, drought, flood, temp etc. as production factors. It's extremely important to collect this type of data at every opportunity. Running a modest 5-600 acer birth to box cattle/grass farm on Lopez Island is being on the tip of the spear of weather/climate change. It's a very big deal!