



BEST PRACTICES FOR BUYING MEAT DIRECTLY FROM FARMERS

Finding a farm to buy from

As a buyer, when looking to purchase meat products directly from a farm there are several points to consider. First, consider your meat preferences, including the cuts or types of meat you like. Location and price are also considerations. Spend some time researching the farms in your area, because livestock production systems differ and that could influence your choice. Perhaps you prefer to support a small, local producer instead of a larger, regional livestock operation. The great thing about buying directly is that you decide which farm is best for you! In North Carolina, [1,335 farms and individuals have meat handler licenses](#), which allow them to sell meat directly from the farm or at farmers markets.

Below are a few suggestions of where, what, and how to buy meat products.

Find Your Local Farmer Through:

- Word of mouth
- Social media
- Websites
- Local farmers markets
- List of [licensed meat sellers](#) from the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.
- The “Got to Be NC Agriculture” [guide to local goods and products](#)
- Download the [Visit NC Farms App](#)
- Find local meat in bulk at [meatsuite.com](#).



Buying Options

North Carolina is fortunate to have great diversity when it comes to livestock production. You can buy beef, pork, lamb, goat, and chicken directly from the farm.

Retail vs. Share

Many meat handlers sell meat as retail cuts or as a share. Buying retail cuts is like buying meat in a grocery store. The price is determined for each individual cut.

A share is more like buying meat in bulk. The price is determined for the bulk, generally at a discount compared to retail. Shares can generally be purchased as whole, halves or quarters. A share will be processed and packaged like a retail cut, but the buyer chooses the cuts. For example, the option of steaks, roasts, stew, cube steak, and ground beef are all available for one share.

Know Your Budget

In order to decide whether to purchase meat by the individual cut or as a share, you need to know your budget. Discounts to cuts may be applied if purchasing in shares compared to purchasing individual retail cuts; however, this is where researching the farms becomes important. Shares can be a great option for large families or sharing meat between multiple families, friends or coworkers. Splitting the share can also help split the cost.

Tips Before Purchasing

- If you find a farm that you are interested in purchasing from, talk to them about their products. Additionally, try buying a small portion or cut to sample. This will help you determine if you like the product and if a share is right for you.
- Do not purchase more than you can reasonably store. If you do plan to buy a share of meat, make sure the freezer is cold before storing the meat.



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- When transporting meat, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Services recommends the two-hour rule. That means perishable foods such as meat and poultry should not be left at room temperature longer than two hours, or no longer than one hour in temperatures above 90 degrees Fahrenheit.
- When purchasing, consider placing your meat in a cooler or insulated grocery bag, depending on your travel time. Keep cold food cold and get frozen meat to a freezer as soon as possible.

Benefits of Supporting Your Local Farmers

When you buy food directly from a farmer, you support local and global food supplies as well as businesses and families in your community. Buying meat and other food products from local farms, whether small or large, allows you to truly connect with your community and your local food sources. Lastly, producers are always willing to educate buyers about their products and operations.

For more information, contact Bryan Hartman, ANR county agent, Stokes County, at bkhartman@ncat.edu, or Janine Woods, Ph.D., agribusiness and marketing specialist, at sjparker1@ncat.edu.

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