CUSTOM MEAT GUIDE · STEP 1: BEFORE YOU BUY

What a Half Beef Really Costs

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THE SHORT ANSWER

A half beef comes with **two bills**: the rancher's price for the animal, and our charge to process it. At current rates, processing half of a typical 1,200 lb steer runs about **$466**, or about $1.94 per pound of meat. Every $1 per pound of hanging weight you pay the rancher adds about $1.55 per pound of meat in your freezer.

Two Bills, Not One

When you buy a beef from a rancher, you pay the rancher for the animal and you pay the processor for the slaughter, cutting, and wrapping. They're separate, so ask the rancher exactly what their price includes.

Our side is a **$150 kill fee** per head, plus **$1.05 per pound of hanging weight** for cut and wrap. Hogs are a $100 kill fee plus $1.05 per pound. You pay for and pick up the full order when it's ready.

How Ranchers Price the Animal

Per pound of hanging weight

Many ranchers price shares this way. You'll know the exact bill once the carcass is weighed, and it lines up with how processing is charged.

Per pound of live weight

The per-pound number looks lower because the animal weighs more on the hoof. A typical steer hangs at about 62% of its live weight, so $2.00 a pound live is about the same as $3.23 a pound hanging.

A flat price per share

Simple to budget. Ask for the expected hanging weight anyway, so you can compare it with other offers.

The Number That Matters: Cost per Pound of Meat

Divide everything you pay by the pounds you actually take home. Because take-home meat is only about two-thirds of the hanging weight, every charge grows when you spread it over the meat:

What you pay	Adds per lb of meat (about)
Our processing (kill fee plus cut and wrap)	$1.94
Each $1.00 per lb of hanging weight to the rancher	$1.55
Each $1.00 per lb of live weight to the rancher	$2.49

These use the same 1,200 lb steer as our hanging weight guide: about 744 lb hanging and 480 lb of meat. Choosing more boneless cuts or leaner ground beef lowers the pounds and raises the cost per pound.

Whole, Half, or Quarter

Splitting the animal splits the meat and the bill. Here's the same steer, with processing split evenly (all figures approximate):

Share	Meat	Processing	Freezer
Whole	480 lb	$931	14–16 cu ft
Half	240 lb	$466	7–8 cu ft
Quarter	120 lb	$233	3–4 cu ft

Quarter beef orders are standard cut only. If you want to choose your own cuts, go in on a half. Not sure which share fits? See buying a whole, half, or quarter beef.

What's Not in Those Numbers

- Smoking, curing, sausage, and jerky are priced per pound on top of processing. See our rates.
- Farms more than 20 miles from our shop have a $1.00 per mile fuel surcharge (one way).
- Beef over 900 lb hanging weight has a $100 oversize fee.
- Orders not picked up within 5 business days may have a $25/day storage fee.

Is It Worth It?

With a share, you pay one price per pound for everything: ribeyes, roasts, and ground beef alike. You also choose the cuts, how thick, and how they're packaged, and you know where the animal was raised. Whether it beats the grocery store depends on the rancher's price and how much of the animal you'll really cook, so put your own numbers in the calculator above.

Questions? Call Howard & Mia.

(509) 900-7145
H&M Custom Meat LLC · 34274 Redwine Canyon Road, Creston, WA 99117

Read it online, with calculators:
handmcustommeat.com/guide/half-beef-cost/

Sources

How much meat should a beef animal yield?, University of Wisconsin–Madison Extension
https://livestock.extension.wisc.edu/articles/how-much-meat-should-a-beef-animal-yield

Processing Percentage (custom meat yield chart), Washington State Department of Agriculture
https://agr.wa.gov/departments/food-safety/food-safety/custom-meats/processing-percentage

Figures are typical ranges from these sources; every animal is different. Prices are subject to change.