

Ground Beef an American Staple

OUR changing meat-eating habits might reveal a little more about how Space Age living is affecting us.

Dr. Jean Mayer, nutrition expert and president of Tufts University, says, "The more men sit at their desks, the more they need reassurance of their maleness by eating red meat. It is the motorcycle of the middle-aged."

In a different context, Dr. John Hopkin, chairman of the American National Cattlemen's Association (ANCA) Council of Economic Advisors, reports that more than 40 per cent of the beef consumed in the United States last year was ground beef.

The American Meat Institute estimates that as many as 50 billion hamburgers—232 per person—were consumed in this country last year, at home and away from home.

Not all ground meat goes for hamburgers. Large amounts are used to make other products or dishes, including the famous "hot dog." The idea of serving a long

sausage in a bun had been invented earlier, but the name became popular in 1900 after a damp, chilly ball game at the Polo Grounds in New York City.

The concessionaire gave up trying to sell cold pop and ice cream. He sent out for what were called "dachshund sausages." Peddlers crying "Get your red hots now!" sold a lot of them.

The name came from Tad Dorgan, cartoonist who was at the game. His drawing showed dachshund sausages in rolls barking at each other. He couldn't spell dachshund, and was too hurried to look it up. So he called them "hot dogs" and the name stuck.

A recent analysis in the Wall Street Journal observes that when food prices rise, few consumers go hungry, but they start buying hamburger more often. An earlier report in the same publication predicted that hamburger will start costing more soon.

The ANCA says the basic trend to more ground beef is due to a supply

factor, rather than a demand factor. When cattle feeding became unprofitable, more cattle were slaughtered without grain finishing, yielding larger amounts of lean meat. As the cycle continues, there may be considerably less ground beef.

Right now, the beef industry is trying to obtain producer approval for small contributions on animals sold to support a \$40 million national beef research and promotion program.

By contrast, it is estimated that pet food companies will spend \$125 million on advertising and promotion to get their respective shares of the market for feeding 100 million dogs and cats. Gross sales run close to \$3 billion a year.

Livestock producers spend a great deal more than that to feed 111 million beef animals, 11 million dairy cows, 52 million hogs and 12 million sheep to provide meat for 215 million Americans, who seem to want a lot of it ground for easy eating.