



Portions of any part of the carcass may be used in making hamburger meat, but the flank, shank and round are main sources. Diagram shows how much each portion comprises.

FEWER STEAKS, ROASTS SEEN IN FUTURE

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Ground Beef Industry Starts Sizzling

By Ferdie J. Deering

Science and the livestock industry have worked diligently to produce tender, tasty steaks and roasts for American consumers.

Now that they have attained a high degree of success, consumers are demanding that more of their beef be ground for hamburgers or fabricated into synthetic steaks and roasts.

It's almost like saying they don't think the steer was put together right, so they want their meat remanufactured.

It is predicted that in the near future, nearly two-thirds of the beef consumed (about 130 pounds per capita) will be served as hamburgers, or as fabricated and processed meats.

According to the American Meat Institute (AMI), 41 percent of 7.6 billion pounds of beef (retail weight) produced in the United States last year was sold as ground beef. AMI estimated 45 percent was ground in 1976. Others see a range from 40 to 50 percent.

Joe Cook, Kansas City livestock mar-

ket analyst, says "We're looking not too far ahead to the day when 60 to 65 percent of the steer will go for hamburger."

Prof. Robert L. Henrickson of the OSU Animal Science Department does not challenge such an estimate, if fabricated meats are included. Henrickson sees fabrication as an expanding development not only for beef, but also for pork and turkey products.

"We hear a lot today about hamburger type cattle," says Dr. Robert Totusek, head of the OSU Department of Animal

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Science and Industry. "They are primarily cattle with less fat on them. They are essentially the same type cattle used for any other production."

He noted that the normal supply of hamburger meat is obtained from slaughter cows that usually carry little or no fat. Feedlots also turn out hamburger type cattle, which are simply cattle fed to a lower degree of finish.

"The percentage of total beef supply that goes into hamburgers is strictly a matter of economics," Totusek said. "When there is a choice, such as with slaughter cows, a lot of it becomes hamburger. But if hamburger prices go high enough — and we may be bordering on that situation now — we actually find hamburger buyers

competing for choice cuts that normally go for roasts or stew."

Totusek said it is extremely important to note that from the cattlemen's standpoint, hamburger type cattle are not necessarily cheap to produce.

"Usually when we think of hamburger type cattle, we are thinking of forage fed cattle," he explained, "but a lot of our records show that it may be more costly to produce them this way than on a combination of grass and feedlot rations."

He added that a lot of these things are taken care of by the system of supply and demand, and by virtue of economics.

Totusek said OSU has a project in progress in which cattle finished strictly on forage are being compared with cattle finished in the

conventional forage-feedlot manner. They are thinking of producing cattle with less fat on them.

"We are looking at several aspects, including whatever implications there might be for health, as well as for feedability," he said.

Grading procedures adopted about two years ago rate carcasses as prime, choice, good and standard, based upon a number of factors. However, tenderness and flavor are not measured.

When meat is ground, tenderness may not be much of a factor, but Henrickson said that no matter how meat is cut, ground or fabricated, basic quality elements still are important.

Commercial firms may add fat or lean trimmings to their hamburger meat to bring the content to their standard formu-

las, some of which contain as much as 25 percent fat, for flavor.

All meat in a steer carcass is edible, and consumers ultimately determine how it will be served. If they want more of their beef ground or fabricated, the industry will produce it.

The market for "choice cuts" will not disappear, however. Although consumers have been known to order "a pound of ground sirloin," that is not usually the part of the carcass that goes into hamburger meat.