



Monthly Newsletter – September 2021

Grain

The Importance of Monitoring Grain During Harvest

Official grading of corn, wheat, and soybeans includes inspection for harmful substances, objectionable odors, insect infestation, damaged kernels, foreign material, dockage, test weight and moisture. At Pettisville Grain, we also pull composite samples for aflatoxin, vomitoxin, and fumonisin chemical testing regularly. These grade standards were set by the USDA as a way for companies to efficiently trade grain on a consistent and fair scale. Pettisville Grain takes pride in being able to sell high quality grain, thanks to our diligent customers. Some things that we believe are important for farmers to continue to keep an eye on during harvest include moisture, foreign material, damaged kernels, insects, and objectionable odors.

Moisture is one of the most important parts of the grade because it is manageable and can create a huge problem during storage if not properly maintained. The standard moisture levels are: corn – 15%, soybeans – 13%, and wheat – 13.5%. There are multiple ways to manage moisture levels in grain including waiting to harvest later, drying grain in a grain dryer, and blending wet and dry commodities together along with aeration in the storage. Newer grain harvesting equipment may have yield estimating technology and/or a scale and they use the moisture of the commodity for calibration. Taking a sample to the elevator is one way to get a moisture test, or farmers can purchase portable moisture testers for use in the field. Making sure the moisture levels are within reason before harvesting crops is a way to reduce the discounts and increase the test weight, which will increase the bottom line for farm operations.

Foreign material and **damaged kernels** are largely impacted by the settings on the combine harvester and the storage systems. During harvest, it is important to monitor the amount of foreign material and broken kernels in the grain to ensure that the grain stays at the high quality that we have seen in this area. Too much foreign material and damaged kernels will have an impact on the ability to store and sell grain because it must be at a certain standard, according to the USDA guidelines.

Insects can be the cause of storage issues as well by eating the grain and severely reducing the quality. The presence of live weevils or other live insects injurious to stored grain indicates probable infestation. If weevils live where grain is stored, they will eat the starch out of the kernels, which destroys the valuable part of the corn for feeders as well as ethanol producers. Weevil infestations are preventable by spraying storage facilities with chemical before the grain goes in at harvest.

Objectionable odors are any musty, sour, or objectionable foreign odors in grain.

Ultimately, it is important for operators to maintain high quality grain so that the farm operation will get better profits and help to raise the bottom line.

Dos and Don'ts of Local Beef

Garth Ruff, Beef Cattle Field Specialist, OSU Extension

If you just glanced at the title of this column, you may be surprised as to how the next few paragraphs unfold, however there are a couple of points that I want to make, and feel are warranted after seeing some misleading/untruthful advertisements for local/freezer beef here recently.

First off, I am a big supporter of local food production and direct marketing. When done properly in some production systems there are opportunities to capitalize on demand for locally produced food, serve as a direct link for consumer education, enhance economic sustainability of the farm enterprise, among other benefits.

I have taught dozens of programs on local foods and direct marketing in the last five or so years. In each of those programs I remind participants of these two things with regards to labeling and direct marketing;

1. Do not misrepresent your product and
2. Do not misrepresent or make false statements about the product of other producers.

Recently several friends of mine have shared with me several instances of both of the above scenarios. In one such instance a freezer beef producer's (who shall not be named) attack on beef produced by other producers and the beef industry was egregious enough to get me wound up; and I try not to get too wound up about things seen on social media. Spreading falsehoods about the wholesomeness of beef is something as an industry we should not tolerate, and I hope that you as producers feel the same.

To hopefully prevent another rant on this very topic let's review some examples of what not to do when putting together a direct marketing plan. Do not misrepresent your product. This is the less aggravating of the two offenses but is an offense that can be misleading to consumers. In most cases the misrepresenting one's own product, standard, commonly used terminology is being used to describe quality are being used without verification. In simpler terms, one cannot market beef as Choice, Prime, or Certified Angus Beef® if that beef carcass has not been graded by an USDA grader. Grading is optional, and the service comes with an associated cost.



Wholesomeness



Eating quality





PETTISVILLE GRAIN CO.

Your Success. Our Future.

Per the Ohio Department of Agriculture web page: *Companies can choose to have the meat and poultry that they sell graded by USDA; it is not mandatory. This is the only mark of identity you have for knowing the quality of the product. If a meat or poultry product is graded by USDA, there must be a USDA grade shield or mark on the carcass, package or product label. Only the official USDA grade can be used as a guide to the quality of the meat. If the company claims it is selling Choice beef, for example, it must be proclaimed on the package or product label within the USDA shield or another approved marking.*

I truly believe that these fouls are often unintentional, due to a lack of awareness of the rules. It is the second type of foul where producers misrepresent or make false statements about the product of other producers that are intentional and gets me fired up. While these comments are fewer in number, they are more damaging to the industry, often pitting direct marketed product against producers of commodity beef. Keep in mind with regards quality, that most commodity beef has been graded by USDA can the above-mentioned quality-based claims can be made.

Keep in mind that there are several reasons to why one would want to distinguish locally produced, direct to the consumer, beef in the marketplace. However, falsehoods about the wholesomeness, safety, and quality of commodity beef should not be made unless there is scientific data to back it up.

In the beef industry there are multiple lanes for producers and consumers to drive in. Not every lane fits every producer or consumer, which makes for the opportunity to make decisions both in production and purchasing of beef. That opportunity to choose, is one of many reasons that make the beef industry unique. Lastly, regardless of which lane we are in as producers, we should all continue to drive towards a common goal of producing a high demand product with a positive consumer eating experience.