

# MARKETING LONGHORN BEEF

Before you consider finishing and selling your own Longhorns you need to consider how you are going to market your product. Therefore, like it or not, you need a marketing strategy and a marketing plan.

Here are 10 tips on how to develop an effective marketing strategy:

## 1. Look at what you are currently doing

Look at the marketing activities you are already engaged in and the marketing skills you have.

- Research what your target market wants; where, when and why customers buy, what they are seeking from your product and what your competitors are providing.
- Identify and select your target market groups so you can position your business to serve them profitably.
- Put your marketing plan to work through selling and promoting your products to customers through effective pricing and distribution.
- Monitor the effectiveness of your marketing by using follow up consultations for customer satisfaction and the impact on your profits.

## 2. Focus on your customers

- Make your customers the focal point of everything you do. Happy customers equal higher profits.

## 3. Have an effective marketing 'team'.

Your business must be customer focused so everyone involved in the business are marketers. In a small business that may be just one or two people! Good businesses are committed to their customers and ensure all members of the team work together to deliver high quality products on time, every time.

- Include marketing in your costings by setting a marketing budget.
- When you're talking to your customers you are marketing - make sure you ask them for feedback to keep in tune with their needs.
- Make use of any external agencies and specialists for research, brochure design, telemarketing or website development.

## 4. Divide your customers into groups

Every customer is different so don't treat them all the same. To treat your customers as individuals look at their buying patterns and then put them into groups. Different groups will probably need to be targeted with different marketing techniques. Groups could include:

- High volume/high value buyers - place large frequent orders
- High volume/low value buyers - place frequent small orders
- Low volume/high value buyers - place occasional large orders
- Low volume/low value buyers - place occasional small orders

## 5. Identify customer benefits

Now you've identified your customer groups you can target both existing and new customers more effectively with specific product offers or 'benefits'.

## 6. Decide how to deliver those benefits

You must now decide on your 'USP' or 'Unique Selling Point' - the thing that truly sets you apart from your competitors. In order to deliver the benefits of your product to your customers you need to use a 'marketing mix'.

- Product - the product you are offering, including packaging and after sales care.
- Price - what the customer pays. There are different types of prices such as list prices, package prices, discounted prices, as well as different ways to arrive at the prices. The price may communicate the position, status and value of the product
- Place - how and when the customer obtains your product, for example direct from you at a farmers market, or via a website.
- Promotion - the different ways to promote your product, for example advertising, direct marketing, PR, farmers markets, agricultural shows

Also consider...

- People - the people you employ, if any, and how they interact with your customers
- Process - the way your business operates
- Physical evidence - the look of your stand, yourself, your farm shop. All of these things can have an impact on how you are perceived.

## 7. Decide what and how to communicate

When you know what your customer groups are and what they want, you must work out a message or messages to each group you want to target. Customers in each group may want different benefits so the message to each group may have to be adapted.

The messages need to emphasise and explain the specific and relevant benefits that you can provide.

You then need to decide the best way of communicating, whether it is through printed media such as brochures or electronic media such as websites and email.

## 8. Make a marketing plan

Once you've made the key decisions, you've effectively developed a marketing strategy. The plan may cover between 6 months and 5 years. The marketing strategy document will explain what you are doing to anyone who needs to know. This may include your bank manager, marketing agencies and funding bodies if you apply for grants.

## 9. Get on with it!

Your marketing plan will specify what your marketing activities are, who is responsible for carrying them out and when. So what are you waiting for!

## 10. Measure and control

Your marketing plan gives you something to measure your performance as your business develops. For instance if you spend money on PR then you can evaluate this expense against any increase, or decrease, in sales revenue or the number of new customers who make contact with you.

# GUIDELINES OF GOOD PRACTICE WHEN DIRECT SELLING LONGHORN BEEF TO YOUR CUSTOMERS

This document is no more than a set of guidelines. They are intended as a form of introduction to those persons wishing to embark on the direct selling of Longhorn beef. They assume that contact has been, or will be, made with the various regulatory organisations and that the necessary permissions and licensing is in place and that all legal requirements are being followed prior to the commencement of trading.

## SELLING TO THE PUBLIC

There is a variety of ways to sell products to the public: Direct from the farm, via mail order, farmers markets, the internet or through local butchers and catering butchers. Your local authority will advise you on the requirements you will need to follow, depending on the distribution methods you choose.

## HYGIENE

It is essential that strict hygiene controls are carried out during all storage, preparation and distribution activities:

- During work in progress, meat and meat products should be out of refrigeration for as short a period as possible
- Ensure that all surfaces which come into contact with food and equipment are cleaned and disinfected before use, frequently during use and between use.
- Ensure that a 'clean as you go' policy exists. Do not allow waste to accumulate on surfaces, keep all waste in bins with lids and remove from food preparation, storage or display areas as soon as practical.
- Ensure that personal hygiene rules are followed, in particular hand washing with a suitable antibacterial agent; before starting work, after using the toilet, after handling raw products or ingredients, after rest breaks, between handling raw and cooked meats and at any other appropriate time.
- Ensure that if you are unsure of any aspect of hygiene practice relating to your business, you contact your local Environmental Health Officer without delay.

## STORAGE AND PACKAGING

The shelf life of beef is determined by the method of packaging used. The most widely used form of packaging for storage is vacuum packing, this can extend the shelf life of beef to up to 4 weeks providing the packs are stored at 0°C and are undamaged.

### Advantages of vacuum packing:

- Storage life is extended.
- Flexible size of packs.
- Small scale machinery available.
- Storage and stock control is easier.

### Disadvantages of vacuum packing:

- Capital cost of machine.
- Vac pack pouches are more costly than ordinary poly bags.
- The process can cause the meat to alter in colour in the package. Usually the normal colour will return once the meat has been out of the package for 10-15 minutes prior to it being cooked.
- There can be an acidic odour given off when the pack is opened. The degree will depend on the time and conditions spent in the packaging. Given the right conditions this odour will soon disappear.

## BEEF LABELLING

A compulsory beef labelling system is in force and the legislation applies to fresh and frozen beef at all stages of the supply chain. You will have to provide compulsory information on pack or in-shop for all beef sold, including minced beef.

There is also legislation controlling certain additional claims about breed, source, methods of production etc. that you are not permitted to make unless you are separately licensed to do so by Defra.

The legal requirements are detailed and somewhat complicated. You should seek advice from Defra or your Local Trading Standards Office.

## ADVICE FOR YOUR CUSTOMERS ON HOW TO STORE FRESH MEAT AT HOME:

- All fresh and cooked meat must be well covered and stored in the refrigerator at all times.
- Ideally raw meat should be kept on a shelf as low as possible in the refrigerator and never on a shelf above cooked foods.
- It is imperative that the juices of raw meat never drip onto cooked foods.
- Left over meats should be returned to the refrigerator as soon as possible.
- Regular checks should be made to ensure that the temperature of the refrigerator is between 0°C and 4°C.



**Good luck selling your Longhorn beef!**

# SELLING LONGHORN BEEF IN FREEZER PACKS

Selling Longhorn Beef in freezer packs containing a complete cross-section is probably the easiest way in which you can become involved in direct marketing the beef that you produce as it means that you are not left with surpluses of fore-quarter.

You will require the services of a suitable abattoir. A good butcher who is licensed to cut up for third parties will need to be found, although this may in some cases be a service offered by your abattoir. Apart from that do be prepared for some extra work as the extra returns from direct selling require extra effort!

It is, of course, very important that animals go for slaughter with a good finish on them. Since flavour is greatly influenced by diet it is essential that any supplementary feeding is carefully chosen and completely natural – a mixture of rolled oats, some rolled barley, linseed pellets for example with plenty of sugar beet shreds would be ideal. Carcasses must be properly hung for tenderness and fullness of flavour, hanging time will vary as the speed at which moisture is lost depends on the level of fat cover, but a hanging time of around three weeks is commonplace for quality beef production.

Vacuum packing in “useable size” packets is essential as is correct labelling. Packaging is all important today as not only do we have to operate legally we also have to compete with what, in terms of presentation, is offered by the supermarkets. Our customers should be able to take delivery of their freezer pack and put it away in their freezer inside ten minutes without the need to wash their hands when they have finished! Having tasted the beef your new customer will undoubtedly come back for more, but not if it meant a lot of work and inconvenience on the day it was delivered.

Be prepared to take notice of feedback from customers and make changes when necessary, be flexible to customer needs by reducing or increasing the size of packs and joints offered or attempting to finish cattle with more or less fat cover according to market requirements. Remember that a ration with too high a level of energy too early in the animal's life will tend to lay down excess fat, it is far better to achieve growth and muscle and then allow the fat to develop more naturally, especially in the case of heifers. Do not make the mistake of assuming that your customers will all like what you like, they might do, but you are producing beef to sell and it is what the customer wants that is important and this may not necessarily be what you like.

Be sure to visit your abattoir, inspect your carcasses and make comparisons with others hanging alongside, accepting constructive criticism where appropriate. Develop a good working relationship with your butcher so that he understands exactly what is required of him and what it is that you are trying to achieve.

Never under sell your product! Achievable prices will vary from region to region, however too cheap a price will create suspicion that there is something wrong with it. A top quality traditionally reared and fully traceable product offered at the market price will be seen as good value for money compared with inferior quality products that are on offer elsewhere. Customers will pay more for better quality beef. Keep an eye on the weekly average deadweight prices published in the farming press and if your gross income from pack sales less killing, butchering, packing and distribution costs for a carcass is not somewhere in the region of a hundred percent greater than it would have been if sold deadweight then you need to increase your price as your customers are getting a very good deal!

Finally remember to do everything within the law. There are many rules and regulations relating to food businesses and food premises, which ones apply to you will depend on what you do, how you do it and how much you produce. The way your product is distributed and sold will determine which hygiene regulations apply to your business. If you are in any doubt which legislation applies to you we recommend that you contact the following organisations for advice; each of them will be only too pleased to provide you with specialist information relevant to your particular enterprise:

- Local Environmental Health Department
- Local Planning Department
- Local Trading Standards Department

