

Cowboy Meats brings OSU to the table

Food and Agricultural Products Center provides quality product to its customers

If you are looking for a “taste” of Oklahoma State University’s agricultural programs, you can find it at Cowboy Meats.

Cowboy Meats markets the end product of OSU’s livestock and meats programs. The retail store took the name Cowboy Meats when the Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center, or FAPC, opened in March 1998. However, it was not the first retail meat store on campus. There was also a retail store in the old meat lab, which was replaced by FAPC.

Cowboy Meats was included in the FAPC building plans from the beginning. Planners realized the importance of having an outlet for the extra products of OSU’s teaching and research programs.

“The purpose of the store is to recover costs from the livestock programs,” said Stanley Gilliland, animal science regents professor and Sitlington Endowed chair.

Most of the products sold through Cowboy Meats come from cattle, sheep and swine raised in OSU’s livestock programs, and all of the meat is processed through FAPC. Students use facilities in the center to get hands-on experience in meat and carcass evaluation. In fact, students in ANSI 2253, meat animal and carcass evaluation, have the opportunity to judge livestock on the hoof, then evaluate the carcasses of the same animals.

“Evaluating the carcasses of the animals we saw live gave me a better idea of the relationship between live traits and carcass traits,” said Matt McGuire, animal science senior.

The facility is federally inspected and is equipped for all aspects of meat processing. The center has a livestock holding area and a harvest area designed for cattle, sheep and hogs. It also includes carcass coolers, cutting rooms, fresh-meat and cured-meat processing rooms and packaging rooms.



Cowboy Meats customer Roy Ball completes a transaction with manager Cassie Palmer. (Photo by Codi Seeley)

For further processing of the meat, the center has a computer-operated smokehouse, a drying chamber and an impingement oven.

“I would say we have the premier facility in the United States,” said Ryan McCollum, animal science sophomore and one of 11 undergraduate students employed in the meat processing area of the center.

“It’s nice to go to class and work in a facility like that,” said McCollum. “It provides a place for people to get an idea of what goes on in a slaughter facility.”

Three times a week, employees package and label prod-

ucts for Cowboy Meats. The operation supplies all the meat sold through the small store, and store income contributes to maintenance of the meat pilot plant.

Student employees gain valuable real-world experience through the meats programs.

“I think this job will help me in the future,” said McCollum. “When people see I’ve worked here, they’ll know I’ve had exposure to the best technology and have worked with knowledgeable people.”

Accounting senior Cassie Palmer served as the manager and sole employee of Cowboy Meats for more than a year. She purchased the products, set the prices, kept track of inventory, took special orders, made invoices and kept financial records for the store. She also stocked the store twice each week.

“It was kind of like running your own business,” said Palmer. “I had a lot of interaction with people, and I improved my accounting skills tremendously.”

The Cowboy Meats manager surveys prices at Stillwater grocery stores monthly. The store’s prices are then set within 50 cents of the survey prices.

“It’s not here to compete with local markets,” said Gilliland.

The selection at Cowboy Meats is similar to that of the other grocery stores in town. Beef and pork are big sellers at the store, said Palmer. The store usually stocks a variety of beef, from ground beef to filet mignon. Roasts and chops are common pork products.

If customers want particular cuts that are not in stock, they can place custom orders. Hams are often custom ordered, as are specialty cuts like racks of ribs. Palmer said it usually takes one to two weeks to fill a custom order. She also said the store gets around 20 percent of its business through custom orders.

“I’ve always gotten good service there,” said Mike Paxton, Cowboy Meats customer. “The meat is vacuum-packed, so it lasts longer and you can see what you’re getting.”

Paxton said the store location and hours are convenient for him. He can shop there after his work day ends at the OSU Physical Plant.



Chance Brooks, associate professor of animal science, instructs ANSI 2253 students on lamb carcass evaluation methods. (Photo by Codi Seeley)

Cowboy Meats is located in FAPC’s Room 145 and is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. every Wednesday and Friday.

Through its products and services for students and customers, Cowboy Meats is a convenient way for Stillwater residents to experience the flavor of OSU.

By Codi Seeley, Osage, Wyo.