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## Retailers urged to capitalize on middle meats

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by Bryan Salvage

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DENVER — Retailers throughout the U.S. are being encouraged by the retail marketing team of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, a contractor to the Beef Checkoff Program, to capitalize on "Middle Meat Mania" this summer grilling season. Beef middle-meat cuts from the rib, loin and sirloin are currently at lower than average levels due to an increase in supply caused by economic conditions that led to a decrease in demand at foodservice.

Retailers have a great opportunity to aggressively feature these favorite grilling cuts, increase profits and build long-term customer loyalty, N.C.B.A. said.

Steaks are the ultimate choice for consumers during the summer grilling season. N.C.B.A. relays retailers are very well positioned to capitalize on current middle-meat wholesale prices as part of their ongoing summer grilling promotions, and can merchandise steaks from the rib, loin and sirloin in many ways.

Wholesale prices for beef middle-meat cuts have declined to 2005-2006 levels, according to Cattle-Fax. Many retailers responded to this opportunity and capitalized on this trend. Over the 13-weeks ending April 26, retailers featured more middle meats as the retail price of rib and loin cuts were down an average of approximately 4%. Consumer response has been very positive, N.C.B.A. said.

Cuts from the rib experienced a pound sales increase of 12.1%, while loin cuts experienced an increase of 6.1%. The pound movement increases of both rib and loin cuts were above the 5.7% pound sales growth for total beef, according to FreshLook Marketing, for the 13-weeks ending April 26. The current outlook suggests there will be more opportunities for featuring beef middle-meat cuts this summer.

"Retailers have a great opportunity to help their customers create restaurant-quality meals at home by grilling steaks from the loin and rib this summer," said Jim Henger, executive director of channel marketing for N.C.B.A., which contracts to manage retail programs for the beef checkoff. "Retailers can offer customers beef's most-tender cuts at lower than average prices, while increasing profits and gaining greater customer loyalty. It's a win-win situation."

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