

## Beef Checkoff Urging Grocers to Capitalize on ‘Middle Meat Mania’

June 30, 2009



With steaks the ultimate choice for consumers during summer grilling season, the Retail Marketing Team of the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA), a contractor to The Beef Checkoff Program, is encouraging retailers to capitalize on “Middle Meat Mania” to stoke profits and gain customer loyalty.

Originating from the rib, loin and sirloin, beef middle meat cuts 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 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 the Denver-based NCBA. “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.”

According to Cattle-Fax, wholesale prices for beef middle meat cuts have declined to 2005-2006 levels. As such, many retailers responded to the opportunity, as evidenced by results amassed over the 13 weeks ending April 26, 2009, during which time retailers featured more middle meats, according to Henger, who added that consumer response has been highly positive. To wit: Fresh Look Marketing data found that cuts from the rib experienced a pound sales increase of 12 percent during the 13-week period, while loin cuts experienced a healthy 6 percent gain. The pound movement increases of both rib and loin cuts were above the 5.7 percent pound sales growth for total beef.

The Beef Checkoff is thus urging retailers to employ a variety of demand-building programs when promoting middle meats this summer, including:

-- The Retail Pricing Matrix (RPM): A tool to aid retailers in determining price points for middle meats, the Beef Checkoff-funded RPM can assist retailers in quickly determining retail prices while accurately predicting "going-in-gross" on selected middle meats. The gross margins reflected in the matrix are based on commonly used cutting techniques. Cutting test yield information is also included on each matrix as a reference.

-- Easy Fresh Cooking: An on-pack labeling program applied to beef packages that features easy-peel labels that give customers recipe ideas for the specific beef cut purchased, along with a photo of the plated meal and cooking instructions.

-- Beef Alternative Merchandising (BAM): A program that brings together new merchandising methods for the ribeye, top loin and top sirloin. The program addresses price sensitivities and provides consumers with appealing portion sizes as well as leaner-looking and more affordable cuts. BAM product information, cutting guide videos and point-of-sale materials are all available for retailer use.

-- Slice 'n Save: Offers cost savings to consumers who buy beef in subprimal form and then cut and wrap it themselves. The program includes on-pack labels, signage, do-it-yourself videos and consumer brochures.

-- Promotional Partnerships: Building on the success of the 2008 summer grilling promotions, the Beef Checkoff Program has compiled a promotional calendar for 2009. This year's promotional partnerships offer customers savings through a distribution of more than 60 million coupons.

Additional information on all the Beef Checkoff-funded programs associated with Middle Meat Mania is available at [www.beefretail.org/markMiddleMeatMania.aspx](http://www.beefretail.org/markMiddleMeatMania.aspx).

#### **Links referenced within this article**

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