

How to Buy Beef Direct: Buyer's Checklist

Buying a quarter or half from a rancher? Tick these off and you'll know your real price, your pickup day and whether it fits your freezer.

1. Before you call

- ☐ Pick a size: quarter, half or whole
- ☐ Check freezer room: about 4.5 cu ft (quarter), 9 cu ft (half), 18 cu ft (whole) in a chest freezer
- ☐ Set a budget. Ohio halves run about \$1,800-\$3,000 all in
- ☐ Shortlist 2-3 ranches near you

2. Ask about the price

- ☐ "Is your price hanging weight or take-home weight?"
- ☐ "Is processing included? Is there a kill fee?"
- ☐ "About how many pounds will I take home?"
- ☐ "How much is the deposit? Can I get it back?"

3. Ask about the beef

- ☐ "Born, raised and finished here?"
- ☐ "Grass-finished or grain-finished?"
- ☐ "Who does your processing?"
- ☐ "Is the ground beef from your own cattle?"

4. Before the butcher calls

- ☐ Ask how long the wait is (2-6 months is common in Ohio)
- ☐ Ask when the cut sheet is due
- ☐ Pick steak thickness, roast size and ground beef pack size

5. Pickup day

- ☐ Clear the freezer the week before; set it to 0°F
- ☐ Bring coolers or sturdy boxes
- ☐ Get the final hanging weight and bill in writing
- ☐ Make sure the beef is frozen solid

Your real price per pound
(Beef + processing + fees) ÷ take-home pounds
Example: \$2,135 ÷ 186 lb = \$11.48/lb. You usually take home about 60-65% of hanging weight.

Good signs
Clear answer on hanging vs. take-home · Names their processor · Written price and deposit terms

Red flags
"Don't worry about it" · Can't say who processes · Price changes when you ask again

Compare 3 ranches

Ranch	\$/lb hanging	Processing + fees	Est. take-home lb	Total	Real \$/lb

Find verified ranchers near you: americanbeeffinder.com/find-american-beef-near-you
Free half-cow calculator: americanbeeffinder.com/how-much-does-half-a-cow-cost
Prices: ABF check of 24 Ohio price lists, Oct. 2026. Freezer sizes: University of Minnesota Extension (quarter), doubled for half and whole. Example uses USDA Q3 2026 national half-cow averages. Always confirm with your rancher.