CONSUMER ATTITUDES TOWARDS LAMB AND BEEF CUTS OF DIFFERENT FATNESS

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Until recently there had been no attempt to assess objectively the attitude of Australian consumers to red meat. Following on from Beilken and Shorthose (1982) and Thatcher (1982) detailed surveys were carried out in mainland Australia to study consumer attitudes towards lamb and beef. Both these studies showed a preference for lean meat (Hopkins and Congram 1985; Kingston et al. 1987). This paper reports the first survey of Tasmanian consumer attitudes towards the fatness of lamb and beef cuts.

Mid and rib loin chops from carcasses representative of each fat score were displayed in an open freezer. There are five fat scores based on the GR measurement i.e. the total tissue thickness at the 12th rib 110 mm from the midline of the carcass. Three cuts of beef, namely Porterhouse, T-Bone and Rump steak, with levels of subcutaneous fat ranging from 0 to 20mm in 5 mm increments were also displayed. Similar cuts were grouped together. Respondents were asked to indicate their preference for each cut, identified by random number, and whether they would be prepared to pay more for their choice.

Sixty-six percent of 143 respondents interviewed for the lamb survey preferred mid loin chops from fat score 1 or 2 carcasses and 92% indicated they would pay more for their choice. For rib loin chops 79% preferred the three leaner choices (fat scores 1, 2 or 3) and 80% were prepared to pay a premium for their choice. Forty-one percent indicated they would remove some of the fat before consuming their chops and 28% said they would remove all of the fat.

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One hundred and fifty-three respondents were asked to indicate their preferred cuts of beef. As for lamb there was a strong tendency to choose the leaner cuts. The majority preferred cuts with either 0, 5 or 10 mm of fat cover; 89% choosing these for Porterhouse steak, 78% for T-Bone and 84% for Rump. Consumers indicated they would pay a premium for their preferred choice of beef cuts. Forty percent indicated they would trim off some of the fat before consuming the meat and 31% said they would remove all of the fat.

With a strong British heritage and being colder than the rest of Australia a larger tolerance to fat may have been expected. It is apparent, however, that Tasmanian consumers have an aversion to over fat cuts of red meat in a similar way to their mainland counterparts. Production at state level should respond to consumer requirements.


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