



Deerfield Fair Shares

Meat shortage: what you need to know

At this time, you may be noticing less meat on the shelves at your local grocery store. You may also be seeing headlines with titles such as “U.S. Meat Shortage” or “Meat Prices Jump due to COVID-19.” These titles can be misleading to readers that are not familiar with the steps in the meat supply chain. Currently, we have more than enough livestock animals in the country and New Hampshire. So, if there is plenty of livestock and high demand from customers, why is there less meat in stores?

The issue in the supply chain comes down to processing facilities. There are three main issues that facilities have to overcome: complete closures, understaffed, and an increased volume of bookings.

Complete closures are a much bigger problem in other areas of the country where larger processing plants are entirely closed. In actuality, there is plenty of livestock ready for processing, just nowhere for them to be sent. These large plants are responsible for most of the meat sent to large grocery chains, which results in less available stock on the shelves.

Fortunately, here in New England, most meat processing facilities are still open as they are typically smaller locally owned businesses. Some facilities do not have the number of staff on hand that they usually would due to COVID-19. This slows down processing time and can back up waiting lists. Processing plants function by booking specific dates for producers to send in livestock; this allows producers to have animals ready and the facilities to plan adequate time. Normally dates are scheduled months in advance to ensure fulfillment of customer orders. When backups occur, it can push other appointments further out or lead to cancellations.

The other issues that facilities are working through are the increased volume of appointments being made from local farms. With unease stirring about a meat shortage, local farms are also seeing an increased demand for meats, so they are booking more appointments than facilities normally see. If a farm wants to sell to customers, they have to have their meat processed at a United States Department of Agriculture certified facility. This is leading to an increased number of appointments at the small number of USDA facilities within the region.

An increasing number of appointments can be positive for businesses to a certain extent, but with lower staff rates, it can cause a backup in the supply chain. Typically, this is the time when livestock owners are scheduling their usual appointments to fill their family freezers as well. Currently, local farms are calling in, but are unable to schedule appointments until, as far out as, January 2021.

There is good news, however! With local processing facilities still open, there is meat making its way to local farms and businesses. Many facilities are working overtime to get processed meat back to farms to supply their local customers. If you cannot find what you are looking for at the store or simply want fresh, locally sourced meats, check out a farm near you!

Exciting News!

With more people looking to source meat from local farms and a decrease in the supply of meat at the stores, Deerfield Fair Shares wants to help. We have heard your request for information on where to purchase local meat, eggs, vegetables, and much more.

At this time, we are currently working on compiling an extensive running list of New Hampshire farms and agricultural products. Our goal is to create a resource that is easy to look through and helps find the exact products you need. We want to support local agricultural businesses and bring attention to New Hampshire agriculture in the time of COVID-19. **Be on the lookout for our easy to navigate local food list!**

Agricultural Business Spotlight

Sunset Hill Angus – PO Box 187, Belmont, NH – (603) 387-6430

Robert Akerstrom

Grain-fed USDA certified Angus beef

Email: rakerstrom2014@gmail.com

Facebook: [Sunset Hill Angus](#)

Vernon Family Farm – 301 Piscassic Road, Newfields, NH – (603) 340-4321

Chicken, Beef, and Pork

Email: info@vernonfamilyfarm.com

Facebook: [Vernon Family Farm](#)

Website: <https://www.vernonfamilyfarm.com>

Willowdale Farm – 135 Middle Road, Deerfield, NH – (603) 491-2721

Heather Overton & Gary Sanborn

Beef & Pork

Email: willowdalefarmnh@gmail.com

Facebook: [Willowdale Farm](#)

Mountain View Farm – Gilmanton, NH – (603) 387-8445

Akerstrom Family

Fresh Pork & Pigs

Email: mountainviewfarm2003@gmail.com

Facebook: [Mountain View Farm](#)

Click on the interactive hyperlinks to be redirected to websites and Facebook pages!

We want to promote our agricultural businesses by spotlighting them and their products. If you would like to be featured in our newsletter, please email swilson.dfs@gmail.com or message our Facebook page!

Story of the Week

The current pandemic has caused numerous visible changes to everyday life, one of which is how students are currently being taught. Many parents are now schooling their young children from home in new and creative ways. High school and college students are learning on their computers thanks to the help of dedicated teachers. High school classes can be difficult enough to transfer online, but this is even more challenging for agricultural courses that rely on hands-on learning.

Sarah Ward has been teaching agricultural education classes for almost thirty years. Currently, she teaches at Coe-Brown Northwood Academy in Northwood, New Hampshire. Coe-Brown closed its doors to all in-person courses on March 16, and students are currently finishing their school year virtually.

Agricultural education classes rely strongly on hands-on activities that allow students to learn and implement different skill sets. Ward stated that “the whole hands-on aspect is off,” meaning she can no longer conduct the activities she typically plans for in the classroom.

An example of this is in Ward’s Natural Resource class. “Fourth quarter for Natural Resources is all about forest production. We actually start to put into practice all the information that we have been learning all year long, and we start learning how to drop trees at this time. Now, there is no way I am going to say to my students: borrow your dad’s chainsaw and do the techniques we learned last fall to drop a ten-thousand-pound tree to the ground with confidence that it will fall where you plan.”

Ward is currently teaching six different classes that each have their own lesson plans. In some cases, she has had to change the entire curriculum for a class to accommodate the new teaching style. “The whole project part of it is gone, which honestly, is what most folks sign up for agriculture classes to do. They like the hands-on aspect, but now there is very little that I can do with them that is hands-on. In Greenhouse Management, for example, not every student has access to a place to grow plants. So, I cannot ask them to do that,” stated Ward.

When possible, Ward has instructed her students to engage in hands-on learning independently. An example would be taking a nature walk and identifying their findings. In some cases, she has created projects for students that cater to their best learning styles, especially those students with special needs.

“With one of my greenhouse management kids, there’s just no way he would have been able to do the online activities. Around that time, his parents ended up putting in a garden, so we had him do some journaling and documenting on the new plants.”

Another example of Ward’s individualized approach pertained to a project she developed on a student’s existing hobby. “He did a project based on fishing because he is an avid fisherman. He started documenting while on his fishing trips. Details such as the weather, what he caught, the size of the fish, and so on.”

The transition to virtual learning has been challenging for students and teachers alike. Overall, Ward feels that a lot of adjusting has taken place to keep students learning. Also, she has been trying to help her students as much as possible by being understanding and offering accommodations if students are unable to turn in an assignment on time.

Ward explained that “a number of my students have gone to full-time jobs during the day. That has presented another challenge because now they’re being motivated to make money. There have been a couple of cases where students have not come out and directly said it, but I believe that they are doing so to help provide for their families at this time.”

In addition to working, students can face more distractions at home than in the classroom. With schools closed, some older siblings have had to look after their younger siblings while parents go to work. There are also challenges such as internet connection problems or a lack of necessary technology. Fortunately, Coe-Brown students are each issued a laptop to complete their schoolwork.

As with other aspects of life, this experience could have some positives within schools. Virtual learning may prove to be useful in the future, according to Ward. “This could be great information for down the road. Think of snow days and how we usually make them up at the end of the year. I think we could honestly complete school on a snow day now because of what remote learning is teaching us.”

Ward looks forward to the time when she can continue teaching her students the lessons that only hands-on experience can reinforce. In agricultural education, there is no replacement for the real deal. Hopefully, classes will resume this fall better than ever! Where agriculture students across the state can continue to cut down trees, drive tractors, grow plants, and learn about animal science where teaching is done best: in the classroom.

Event News

Stratham Fair – July 16 - 19

Cheshire Fair – July 30 - August 2

Belknap County 4-H Fair – August 1 & 2

Lancaster Fair – September 3 - 7

The Sandwich Fair – October 10 - 12

Additional Resources

Local Harvest

<https://www.localharvest.org/exeter-nh>