

So, What Exactly Are We Raising?

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When cattlemen are asked what they are raising, the typical response is “quality beef and as many pounds of it as they can”. The truth is most of the time the average producer or consumer hasn’t a clue as to what a beef animal is to us. Yes we’re producing a rib-eye; our animals get priced by that rib-eye, so that’s what we seem to focus on. But what other things come from cattle, because we know that a 1300 lb steer is not all rib-eyes?

When the truth is told, on average, only half of an animal goes into retail beef. So everything else is a by-product. To break down the by-products, let’s classify them as edible, inedible, and medical by-products. Although most ranchers only care about how much retail beef is in a carcass and if it will grade, there are many other industries foaming at the mouth to capture that other 50% of the animal.

Here is a list of a few of the by-products and their uses. Many of them might surprise you!

Cattle By-Products

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Edible:

- Variety Meats
- Liver, brains, tongue, heart, oxtail, kidney, tripe, sweetbreads.
- Fats
- Oleo stock (margarine, bakers’ shortening)
- Oleo oil (margarine, bakers’ shortening)
- Oleo stearine (chewing gum, candy)
- Gelatin
- Marshmallows, ice cream, canned meats, candy
- Intestines
- Natural sausage casings

Inedible:

- Hide
- Leather (sports equipment, shoes, purses, car seats, etc.)
- Binders (plaster, asphalt)
- Hair (insulation, “camel hair” brushes)

- Fats
- Industrial oils, lubricants, soap
- Glycerin (explosives, cosmetics)
- Fatty acids (shaving cream, candles, detergents)
- Bones, Horns, Hooves
- Buttons, bone china, piano keys, glues, adhesives, animal feeds, photographic film, sandpaper.

Medical:

- Pancreas
- Insulin (treats diabetes)
- Pancreatin (aids digestion)
- Glucagons (treats hypoglycemia)
- Trypsin and Chymotrypsin (promotes healing of wounds)
- Blood
- Thrombin (blood coagulant)
- Bone
- Bone marrow (treats blood disorders)
- Soft cartilage (plastic surgery)
- Pituitary gland
- Corticotropin (ACTH) (treats arthritis and allergies)
- Thyrotropin (TSH) (stimulates thyroid gland)
- Liver
- Heparin (anticoagulant)
- Liver extract (treats anemia)
- Stomach
- Rennet (aids in milk digestion)
- Adrenal gland
- Epinephrine (relief from asthma and allergies)

While this table only suggests a few of the uses for cattle, I hope you realize that we're not just producing a "mouth-watering" steak. More than 100 pharmaceutical drugs are made from our product. It takes the pancreases from 26 beef animals to keep one person, of the 1.25 million daily insulin dependent people, alive for a year. So let's be proud of what we're raising, because our product is everywhere. Not only is it in our bellies, but it's at the fireworks stand, on the sports field, in purses, kitchens, hospitals, cars, trucks, medicine cabinets, and in our showers. Face it, people like beef, even if they won't eat it.