Nicholas Meat Quarterly
Company News and Updates for the Loganton Community
SPRING 2026

BEEF DEMAND STRONG AMID TIGHT CATTLE SUPPLIES

The demand for protein – specifically beef – continues to remain strong in 2026. Market conditions like tight cattle supplies matched with record-setting beef demand are impacting the beef market as producers work to feed consumers the protein they demand.

"The U.S. cattle and beef industry enters 2026 with strong but volatile market conditions, as historically tight cattle supplies, record-setting beef demand, and elevated policy and weather uncertainty continue to support prices, even as markets appear to near cyclical highs," said Mike Murphy, CattleFax chief operating officer. "Tight inventories and exceptional demand remain the dominant forces shaping the market; however, producer demographics, high input costs, and policy uncertainty point to a slow and measured expansion phase."



It is obvious that consumer preferences continue to favor high-protein, nutrient-dense foods, reinforcing demand even as higher prices move through the supply chain. In fact, beef continues to rule the meat case, holding 55% of total fresh meat value, compared to chicken at roughly 25% and pork at just above 10%.[2]

Historically, chicken has been the protein of choice for U.S. consumers with 83% eating chicken weekly. However, beef is a close second with nearly three quarters of U.S. consumers – or 71% – consuming beef weekly. Additionally, over one-third of consumers say that beef is their top protein of choice!

Beef demand remains historically strong entering 2026, driven by exceptional quality (84% Choice or higher) and consumer preference for protein, despite record-high retail prices.[1]

RETAIL DEMAND REMAINS STRONG

When heading to the grocery store, U.S. consumers are favoring both fresh ground beef and steaks. In fact, that duo makes up more than 70% of the total beef value that consumers are purchasing. In addition, buyers are looking to roasts, brisket and other value-added cuts when at the store.

When buying beef at the grocery store, most U.S. consumers favor ground beef with 62% of respondents saying they have eaten the ingredient in the past week. Additionally, 52% of respondents said they had a hamburger patty. Beef steak, beef roast, beef ribs and beef brisket were also favored by respondents.[3]

BEEF INDUSTRY RESPONDS TO DEMAND

As demand for beef continues to remain strong, U.S. beef herd levels have fallen to 86.2 million head, according to USDA data. This is the lowest total cattle inventory in 75 years and marks a 0.35% drop from 2025 as high input costs and drought impact producers' ability to expand their herds.

However, as beef herds are tightening and adjusting to economic conditions, dairy farmers have rapidly increased their contributions to the supply chain with beef-on-dairy. American Farm Bureau Federation economists estimate that 72% of dairy farms now use beef semen when breeding lower-indexing dairy cows. This

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BEEF DEMAND *Continued from Cover*

shift allows producers to have higher-value calves for the beef market when compared to straight dairy breeds.

According to the National Association of Animal Breeders, domestic sales of beef semen have surged from 1.2 million units in 2010 to 9.4 million units in 2023. Of these sales, 7.9 million units were used in dairy cattle, while only 1.5 million units were used in beef herds.

As reported in Drovers, the industry is in a "turning" phase, with high prices encouraging potential, yet slow, herd rebuilding. However, analysts do not expect to see significant expansion until closer to 2028. Drovers also noted, "Record-high cattle prices driven by tight, post-drought supplies, combined with strong consumer demand for beef, have severely compressed margins for U.S. beef packers resulting in financial pressure."

IN SUMMARY

Consumer demand fundamentals remain historically strong. Quality improvements have transformed beef's competitive position, with 84% of fed cattle grading Choice or higher and 12% achieving Prime in 2025. This quality shift, combined with cultural emphasis on protein, positions beef favorably with consumers. For now, volatility may increase as markets digest the cyclical transition, but the underlying rhythm of tight supplies, strong demand, and gradual herd rebuilding suggests profitability will return to the cow-calf sector and set the stage for renewed expansion into 2027 and beyond.[4]

TO LEARN MORE
ABOUT BEEF DEMAND AND CONSUMER TRENDS, VISIT
www.BeefResearch.org.

Sources
1: CattleFax, CattleCon February 2026
2: Circana, Fresh Beef Sales by Volume and Value, Data Ending 12/28/2025.
3: Consumer Beef Tracker, 2023 – 2025. Analysis: National Cattlemen's Beef Association
4: CattleFax

NEW DIETARY GUIDELINES: EAT REAL FOOD



The 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, released in January 2026, call for a major reset from past guidelines in favor of protein and "real food." With the new guidelines calling for protein at every meal to aid in muscle growth, brain health and immune function, proponents are calling for people to consume real food that includes whole, single ingredient foods.

"We were pleased to see this revised set of guidelines as it supports what we have advocated for years – beef is a healthy, wholesome food with a valuable place in America's diet," said Duane Eichenlaub, Nicholas Meat Regulatory and Sustainability Manager.

PRIORITIZING PROTEIN

People are encouraged to consume a variety of protein foods from animal resources, including eggs, poultry, seafood and red meat, as well as plant-source protein foods including beans, peas, lentils, nuts, seeds and soy. Red meat and beef are highlighted as essential, nutrient-dense foods (iron, zinc, B12).

The guidelines focus on building a healthy diet around whole foods, limiting highly processed foods and added sugars, and prioritizing protein, like nutrient-dense beef, at every meal. Red meat is specifically mentioned as a healthy source of protein in a varied, balanced diet.[1]

When speaking at CattleCon in Nashville, Tenn., in February, Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. encouraged people to "eat real food," and asked cattle producers to "get the production up."

For additional information about the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines, go to https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/.

Sources
1: https://cdn.realfood.gov/DGA.pdf.

Meat our People

INTRODUCING THE NEW NICHOLAS MEAT SALES TEAM

At Nicholas Meat, we take pride in providing high-quality beef products you can trust. Our commitment to quality begins with the cattle we source and continues through every step of our modern, state-of-the-art production process. We offer a full range of beef products, all produced under strict food safety standards and verified humane handling best practices. Our dedication to animal welfare, food safety, and consistent product quality ensures dependable results for your business and your customers. We are excited to introduce the community to our new sales team that is located in-house at Nicholas Meat.



Katherine

How long have you been with Nicholas Meat?
Since September 6, 2022
What did you do before joining sales and/or Nicholas Meat?
Before being part of the sales team, I worked in accounts payable. Prior to that I was a purchasing superintendent.
What is your favorite part of the job? The favorite part of my job is being part of an amazing team, whom I can count on to help me get better at what I do each day.
What is the best piece of sales advice you've ever received? Don't be afraid to ask questions, it gives you knowledge and helps build up relationships with your customers.
When you're not at work, what is your favorite hobby or activity? I love spending time with my family, watching movies, and doing arts and crafts with my little one.
What is something you've recently learned that's made you better or more efficient at your job?
Listen to your customer and learn from your customer. It will provide everything you need to "close the deal."



Erik

How long have you been with Nicholas Meat?
9 months
What did you do before joining sales and/or Nicholas Meat? I worked as a private consultant.
What is your favorite part of the job? Getting to meet interesting people and developing long-term business relationships.
What is the best piece of sales advice you've ever received? Something I knew but had forgotten – "How many times they say "no" is irrelevant. It's the one time they say "yes" that matters."
When you're not at work, what is your favorite hobby or activity? Finding ways to challenge myself, either by reading or doing something creative, like painting.
What is something you've recently learned that's made you better or more efficient at your job? I knew this but had forgotten its relevance. "The definition of success in sales is going from failure to success without the loss of enthusiasm."



Mabel

How long have you been with Nicholas Meat? I have been working for Nicholas Meat for a little over four years.
What did you do before joining sales and/or Nicholas Meat?
I previously served as a training superintendent at Nicholas Meat.
What is your favorite part of the job? My favorite part of working in sales is meeting other sales representatives, building strong business relationships with them, and learning the job through them.
What is the best piece of sales advice you've ever received?
The best piece of advice I have ever received in this role is, "I am not an order taker; I am a salesperson." That mindset has truly shaped the way I approach my work every day.
When you're not at work, what is your favorite hobby or activity? When I am not at work, I enjoy spending quality time with my family and friends, especially my children.
What is something you've recently learned that's made you better or more efficient at your job? One of the most important things I have learned in my career is that building trustworthy and friendly relationships with customers makes a big difference. They truly appreciate it, and it has helped me become more efficient and successful in my role.



Christian

How long have you been with Nicholas Meat? 8 months

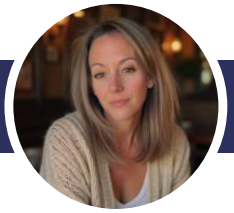
What did you do before joining sales and/or Nicholas Meat? I have worked at a variety of beef companies including National Beef, Creekstone and Demkota throughout my career.

What is your favorite part of the job? It's a puzzle with moving pieces. The picture will never be perfect but it's super rewarding the closer you get.

What is the best piece of sales advice you've ever received? Be curious.

When you're not at work, what is your favorite hobby or activity? Disc golf, skateboarding, rock concerts, and exploring my kids' hobbies and interests.

What is something you've recently learned that's made you better or more efficient at your job? I'm new to the cow side of the business so every bit of product knowledge is helpful. There are many cow products that customers prefer over steer/graded products which is not something I expected before coming to Nicholas Meat. I have learned to be proud and confident in our pricing and let our quality and reputation do the rest!



Julie

How long have you been with Nicholas Meat? I've been here for only a few weeks. I'm excited learn more about the operation and the customers we serve.

What did you do before joining sales and/or Nicholas Meat? In the past, I worked in sales for other beef packing companies where I focused on trimmings, boxed beef and building relationships with customers across the industry.

What is your favorite part of the job? Honestly, it's the strategy behind moving the whole animal. Anyone can sell a steak but figuring out how to place every cut and every trim efficiently is the real game. I enjoy working with customers to find solutions that make sense for their operation while making sure we maximize value out of the carcass.

What is the best piece of sales advice you've ever received? Don't sell product, solve problems. When you understand what your customer really needs – whether that's price stability, a consistent supply or help covering an item they're short on – the sale usually takes care of itself.

When you're not at work, what is your favorite hobby or activity? I enjoy spending time outdoors with my family, especially my three granddaughters.

What is something you've recently learned that's made you better or more efficient at your job? I've spent a lot of time building better tools to track inventory, pricing and availability so we can make faster decisions. Having clear data in front of you helps prevent overselling, keeps communication tight with shipping and the plant, and lets you respond to customers quickly when the market moves.



Hunter

How long have you been with Nicholas Meat? Less than a month! I'm still learning names, finding my way around, and trying not to get lost in the plant.

What did you do before joining sales and/or Nicholas Meat? Before I ventured into sales, I was a meat cutter and meat room manager. Since transitioning into sales, I've spent my time developing brands and launching programs within the protein industry.

What is your favorite part of the job? I enjoy building relationships with my customers and navigating the hurdles that come our way together.

What is the best piece of sales advice you've ever received? That's a hard one to answer because I've been fortunate to have many great mentors who have shaped who I am today. Two pieces of advice stand out: be yourself and the rest will fall into place and always treat people kindly because you never know where someone will end up – we all may need each other someday.

When you're not at work, what is your favorite hobby or activity? Outside of work, I enjoy hunting and spending time exploring the great outdoors with my wife, family and dogs.

What is something you've recently learned that's made you better or more efficient at your job? Over the past few weeks, I've had the opportunity to spend time on the production floor with the entire team. Seeing how everything works at Nicholas Meat – from grading cattle to watching items move through the line and into boxes – has been incredibly valuable. It's also given me a deeper appreciation for the fast-paced environment and the many moving parts involved. That experience will help me better explain the process to customers and provide context when challenges occasionally arise.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Welcome to the Spring edition of the Nicholas Meat Quarterly Newsletter. Here at Nicholas Meat, we are excited for spring to hit our beautiful Sugar Valley. We thank all the beef and dairy farmers working year-round to supply our community with wholesome, nutritious food.

Here's a look at what else you'll find in this edition:

1 Beef Demand Strong Amid Tight Cattle Supplies

2 New Dietary Guidelines: Eat Real Food

3 Meat Our People: Introducing the Nicholas Meat Sales Team



PENNSYLVANIA BEEF COUNCIL
Funded by Beef Farmers and Ranchers

At Nicholas Meat, we are all about the beef!

We hope you enjoy this recipe from the Pennsylvania Beef Council.

Corned Beef Hash

Rather than making a tried-and-true Reuben, let's make some Corned Beef hash for a tasty breakfast dish. Here Corned Beef is diced, skillet-cooked with cubed potatoes and thinly sliced leeks and ideally topped with an egg.

Ingredients:

- **12 oz. cooked Corned Beef or thickly sliced deli Corned Beef, cut into 1/4-in. pieces**
- **1-2 T. vegetable oil**
- **4 c. cubed potatoes (such as red-skinned, baking or sweet potatoes)**
- **2 medium leeks, thinly sliced**
- **1/2 t. garlic salt**
- **Fried or poached eggs (optional)**

Cooking:

1. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in large nonstick skillet over medium heat until hot. Stir in potatoes, leeks and garlic salt. Cover and cook 12-16 minutes or until potatoes and leeks are tender, stirring occasionally. Remove cover and continue to cook cook 3 to 5 minutes or until potatoes begin to brown, stirring occasionally and adding remaining 1 T. oil to prevent sticking, if needed.
2. Add Corned Beef to skillet. Continue to cook 2-3 minutes or until beef is heated through. Serve hash with fried or poached egg, if desired.

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Reach out to our team at info@nicholasmeats.com with your request.

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