

Cattle Gallstones Bring Big Profits

The tenderloin isn't the most valuable part of beef cattle these days. Instead, there's a growing market for gallstones. These nuggets of hardened bile are harvested in cattle gallbladders during processing, attracting prices up to \$65 per gram. But they're rare. Estimates show that gallstones can be found in just 1% of cattle. The Australian cattle industry produces about 200 kg (440 lbs.) of gallstones annually, while world leader Brazil tops out at 2,000 kg. (4,400 lbs.) Sources report that it takes an average of 30,000 cattle to generate 1 kg (2.2 lbs.) of gallstones, which puts the estimated value per cow at around \$5 a head at best.

No one understands the exact mechanisms that give cattle gallstones. Older cattle tend to produce more, which goes against the beef industry's interest in getting animals to slaughter weight quickly. Still, U.S. processing plants are taking note and ramping up efforts to export the porous stones to Hong Kong.

There, gallstones are prized by herbalists. Once harvested, the gallstones are cleaned and dried for weeks before being crushed into a powder and mixed with other ingredients (powder buffalo horn, realgar gemstones). They're then encapsulated and sold for about \$100 a pill as protection against strokes.



Once harvested, the gallstones are cleaned and dried for weeks before being crushed into a powder and mixed with other ingredients.

There's research to back up the hype. "Bovis calculus, also named Niu Huang in Chinese, is utilized as a resuscitation drug for treating neurological disorders," explains a *Frontiers Journal* publication from January 2025. In China, people take gallstone pills as soon as they show stroke symptoms.

Sky-high demand has led to theft in beef processing plants. Many Chinese citizens hoard the stones as a currency they believe will only increase in value.

Project Connects Producers To Markets

If you're a meat producer, butcher, chef or consumer, you'll find what you're looking for at the Good Meat Project (GMP). The nonprofit's Good Meat Finder database of 1,000 farmers, butchers and chefs makes it easy to find them by location or industry segment. You can search by seller, meat species, certifications and practices, such as organic, grass-fed, pasture-raised, heritage breeds, and more.

The directory is just one of multiple ways GMP has helped meat producers connect with their markets for the past 11 years, according to Michele Thorne, GMP.

"Our initial focus was educating the consumer about whole animal butchery, how to break down different animals to cuts and how to prepare them," says Thorne.

The GMP grew out of the Portland Meat Collective. Camas Davis started the collective to tell the story of responsible meat and how to get it to the table. The goal of GMP was to open-source the collective model across the country. More than a dozen collectives have since formed.

The focus has broadened to include helping the producer direct market their animals. Marketing Fundamentals for Good Meat Producers is a self-paced, pre-recorded course. It's free, and by the end of the course, producers can create a strategic map to make marketing more effective and easier to implement.

GMP YouTube videos cover a wide range of subjects, including marketing, food photography, finance, e-commerce, food preparation and talking to a butcher.

GMP currently doesn't have members; however, Thorne allows memberships may be necessary as funding becomes more challenging to source.

"In addition to the 1,000 farmers, butchers and chefs who participate in the directory and



Photo courtesy of Good Meat Project

"In addition to the 1,000 farmers, butchers and chefs who participate in the directory and the organization, we have 36,000 active users of the site," says Thorne.

the organization, we have 36,000 active users of the site," says Thorne.

GMP has multiple programs to help its collaborators. For example, Real Burger of Earth Day is for grass-fed producers to promote grass-fed meat to environmentally conscious consumers. In 2024, it involved 50 farms, ranches and butcher shops.

Initially focused on beef, GMP is expanding to include bison, lamb and goat. Farmers and ranchers can participate in an in-depth, direct-marketing course at no charge. They can also utilize marketing tool kits that help explain bulk buying, meat preparation, and more to share with current and prospective customers.

She notes that awareness of the organization and the services offered continues to grow. "We've had 125 businesses sign up to be listed in our directory in the past six months," says Thorne.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Good Meat Project (www.goodmeatproject.org).

Tyler Christman has used a wheelchair as his "work truck" for the past 15 years to run his business reclaiming wood from old farm buildings.



Disabled Woodworker Reclaims Old Farm Buildings

"I've had to figure out ways to do things differently my whole life, and I've found there's not much I can't do if I put my mind to it," says Tyler Christman of Bald Eagle Barnwood, Lecompton, Kan.

Christman's business specializes in dismantling old barns and other wood farm buildings and "reclaiming" the wood, primarily for reuse as furniture, home finishing and "man caves." While other companies are in the barn deconstruction business, Christman is unique because he was born with cerebral palsy. He does most of his work while seated in a wheelchair, which he affectionately calls his "work truck."

Christman, 33, operates Bald Eagle Barnwood with a crew that includes his father and uncle, with help from other family members when needed.

"Taking down a barn is actually the easiest part of the process," Christman says. "Hauling the lumber home, removing nails and cleaning the boards, and then organizing and storing all the lumber is the bigger challenge. We have an inventory of thousands of square feet of lumber, and it's always an adventure to keep it somewhat organized and displayed so customers, primarily from Kansas and Missouri, can easily see and pick out the exact wood they need for their project."

Christman says the work never gets

boring because old structures and aged wood have so much history. "I now view our work as 'reclaiming history' because many of these barns give us a glimpse of what life was like one or even two centuries ago. The wood came from the best trees, and the skill, grit and craftsmanship it took to build these buildings before electricity, using the hand tools of the era, is simply astonishing. That's why I always like to learn the story behind the buildings, so I can pass that history to the people who buy the wood."

Christman says their most valuable marketing tools involve social media, typically Facebook and Facebook Marketplace. "Word of mouth is also a powerful marketing tool for us. If you treat people fairly and they're happy with the wood they buy, they'll often refer us to another prospective customer, which has helped our business tremendously."

Fifteen years of experience has also contributed to their success, Christman says. "Many folks arrive at our shop with a rough idea of what they want, and we can provide ideas and show hundreds of photos of successful projects. That's often been the key to making their visions come alive."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Tyler Christman, 516 N 2100 Road, Lecompton, Kan. 66050 (ph 785-318-0259; www.baldeaglebarnwood.com; Facebook: Bald Eagle Barn Wood).

Niche Farming With Pasture Raised Water Buffalo

After experiencing the rich flavor of mozzarella di bufala cheese on a trip to Italy, David and Faythe DiLoreto returned to their North Carolina farm and searched for a similar product in nearby stores.

"Turns out it's almost impossible to find in the U.S., and what we did find didn't match the flavor we had in Italy," David says. "Even though we weren't farmers, we had 60 acres of pasture, so we decided to raise our own water buffalo and make our own cheese at Fading D Farm."

The DiLoretos acquired enough cows to start a milking operation and learned the cheese-making process. "Our cheese was excellent, and we produced enough to sell at local markets, at our farm and in a few stores," David said. "The big issue was that water buffalo cows only produce about a gallon to a gallon and a half of milk per day, so our raw milk supply limited cheese production. Through better nutrition and artificial insemination with sires from higher-producing cattle in Italy, we increased milk production."

Over 8 to 10 years, the DiLoretos improved milk production by 70%. Their cows also showed better body and udder conformity. David says the value of more milk covered the cost incurred with aggressive breeding to higher value genetics. "We considered adding more cows, but labor was always an issue, so now we're breeding for meat and milk production. We can sell about 12 animals a



"Water buffalo are definitely a niche market," DeLoreto says. "They're very easy to raise, and the cows thrive on our pasture."

year to people who want them for meat, milking or as pets. We also produce several meat products that have sold well in local markets and from our farm," David says. The Fading D Farm website shows all their products and several water buffalo meat recipes.

"Water buffalo are definitely a niche market," David says. "They're very easy to raise, the cows thrive on our pasture, and we feed them hay during winter months when grass is dormant. The calves are born after a 10 to 10 1/2-month gestation. We bottle feed them plenty of mother's milk, give them plenty of daily attention so they're used to human interaction and are easy to handle when they're mature."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Fading D Farm, 295 Fading D Rd., Salisbury, N.C. 28144 (ph 980-330-8189; fadingdfarm@gmail.com; www.fadingdfarm.com).