

4-7-2021- Mobile Meat Processing Workshop and Cattle Producers Meeting

Attending: Deb King (rancher, Lone Pine), Melinda Charlo (Indian Preference Coordinator at CSKT), Velda Shelby (Economic Director for CKST), Zim Lytle (meat processing plant on Round Butte, slaughter, butcher, processing, and cattle producer), Jace Smith (Diana Smith Cow/Calf Producers, Zim is his uncle, sells beef to private individuals on reservation), Janet Camel (Planner CKST), Anita Matt (Moiese producer and tribal council vice chair), Nancy Schall (Producer), Wanda Salomon (run cattle ranch in Pablo- 225 head of cattle, combination grass and grain)

Taylor Lyon, Brenna Fulks, Kaylee Thornley

Presenters: Pam Kingfisher, Pati L, Aaron

Taos Mobile Meat Processing Project

Woksape- Native Community Food Systems

Community, Unity, Opportunity, Equity, Harmony

Mobile Meat Processing-

Going Mobile

- Constructing the MSU was a result of the work they had done at TCEDC
- Taos County Economic Development Corp
- Matanza- means butcher in Spanish but also means a tradition of Northern New Mexico's Culture, where respectfully harvesting an animals as a community is *celebrated*.
- Supporting food, land and cultures of the peoples of Northern New Mexico
- They were the second USDA inspected mobile unit
- They had it built in WA state and specifically designed to accommodate the bison from the Pueblos
- Cow calf operators were making very little (like ours); people were thinking about giving up, but they didn't want to because it was tradition,
- They had a semi to pull it, beef and bison
- The unit is designed to be easily cleaned, before, during and after. They use organic apple cider vinegar as the perfect acid wash.
- A concrete pad at the slaughter site helps.
- There is multi species: beef, bison, elk, yak, sheep, goats, pigs
- One shot, death force stun to release the animal quickly
- The animal's head is removed outside, the animal is bled outside
- There must be a water source though
- The animal is winched inside, and the processing begins with removal of the hide and evisceration. There is an offal chute in the truck.
- The rail system in the truck is designed to do the process all the way through. There is a cooler in the back for hanging the halves. The truck can stay out for several days with the inspector coming back and forth.
- Finding the right staffing for these units is essential and it's hard work. You'll need a CDL driver too.

- The USDA inspector will be on site and will inspect the animals to make sure they are healthy and the processing is done right.
- The animals would be brought in the night before. They can do more volume if rancher's pool.
- Cut and wrap facility was put on a rammed earth foundation to match the height of the truck. The rails from the truck match to the rails in the processing facility. It was constructed by Polar King. It was modular, it was very self-contained and separated. USDA really liked this type of construction.
- In the cut and wrap it's very small yet efficient. 2-3 people worked inside. They broke it down with saws and then moved it to cutting, they had vacuum packers. They mostly used the vacuum packer over paper, turned out to be preferred compared to paper for freezing. They had a burger grinder. It's a 400 sq. Ft building- \$200,000 on the unit and \$30,000 on the cut and wrap. The \$200,000 came from the state legislature. It was really important to be as economical as possible to reduce the cost to charge for the facility.
- They had a business plan that said it would take 10 years to break even and they did a little bit better.
- It was helpful to ranchers to have a brand for the mobile slaughter unit and other tribally produced foods. They went with OSO Good Foods.
- They did rancher forums. They would demonstrate the process, allow people to get in to the unit, see how it worked, understand it better.
- The offal stays on the property of the rancher, they determined how to dispose it. They could use the offal in traditional ways, they could do what they wished with it. They also did an organic composting workshop so they could see how to compost it easily above ground.
- USDA Inspections- the inspector really appreciated their process and the humane way they did it.
- A lot of ranchers still direct marketed, but a lot of natural food stores were very interested in the product and they could sell because of the USDA inspection.
- Scheduling the unit is extremely important to make it efficient and to serve all ranchers. This could be the role that the cooperative could play is doing this scheduling, and branding.
- The rancher owned the meat at the end. The Mobile Matanza charged for their services, but pretty much at cost.
- It's extremely important to do that branding. Get your foods into many markets. That diversification is super important. Farm to School- have the kids have bison once a month. That's amazing. It's part of food sovereignty
- They built it in 2002
- On the Cherokee Nation, a lot of the cattle were just being sent to the cattle barn, producers were not finishing their cattle, they were not getting the end result of the meat.
- Look at the impact of very large facilities and the environment. And what will you do with all of the waste water. The mobile is so much more indigenous in its process.
- Aaron- \$415,000 for the MSU, feasibility study done last year, not final decisions on whether they'll go mobile or not. Maybe at least mobile for bison. And a scaled up version of the secondary processing for bison, and full processing for cattle.
- The biggest challenge is pre-planning, and staffing for the facility.
- Pati L- wowoki@newmex.com, Pam Kingfisher shiningwaterspk@gmail.com

IV. Supply and Demand Data

- a) Volume of Beef Being Produced Here – from 13 survey responses, 2019 data
 - i) 1,038 total calves to market annually, Oct.-Jan., average 631 lbs. ea., 92% grass-fed, most black angus or Herefords, average price was \$836/calf (See e-mailed hand-out.)
 - ii) A 1000 lb. live steer yields approx. 450 lbs. (45%) of edible meat (USDA Fact Sheet)
 - iii) If we could assume a 45% yield for calves (1,038 calves x 631 lbs. = 654,978 x 45%), they would produce ~294,740 lbs. of meat; however additional finishing is typically required for cost efficiency¹
- b) SKC Research – CSKT Programs use 20,635 lbs. of beef (<7% of CSKT member meat production, based on above calculations)
- c) Potential Volume of Bison that Could Be Produced Here

Do we want to do MSU?

- Anita- Cow/calf operations primarily, Pete White pointed out that up in Blackfeet and put 1000 cattle together, can demand a higher price through this. If CSKT producers can get together 500-600 head they can get a better price.
- Right now they depend on a single broker, and they pretty much take whatever price they can get, it's often hard to get a contract. They got \$1.30/lb.
- They need help with marketing, they need help with selling the cattle. They need help getting that market where it should be.
- The idea is to look at where there are potential to finish and sell locally to make a higher price point. The MSU could also process culls.
- The marketing component is key, you can get better price per pound. The herd will have to be culled this year, they need an MSU.
- Right now we are in a monopoly of whoever comes through with those contracts, they have to accept.
- Joel Clairmont- not much progress on getting a group of producers together to sell.
- Zim- some grassfed, Jace- more grassfed (30 non-replacement heifers), Deb- how long would it take to feed the cattle out, but might be interested in joining, Wanda- grass fed cattle
- Zim- has a MSU- for 5 head, the trailer for big ones area about \$400,000.

Two projects

- Pooling cattle and getting a group contract
- Feasibility study for selling local beef and bison

Food sovereignty:

- Idea is to become a nation that can feed itself within itself.
- COVID took a turn with the food sovereignty team, COVID funds for food security, Prices were all over the place. What kind of food system do we have here on the reservation. If it wasn't for trucks coming in, we'd be in trouble, we'd be scrambling here.
- What used to be: different slaughter houses, creameries, pretty much self-sufficient back in the 1950s
- Need processing center for food produced here, Native owned, what would the upgrades at Kicking Horse be, \$1.9 million on Kicking Horse kitchen, and other upgrades at facilities around the reservation. The Long House, Elmo, Hot Springs, there are 4-5 that they upgraded.

- Food to supply the kitchens for different programs that are out there that are unstable and that could help with meeting their food needs.
- MMFEC could be an option if they need a USDA processing.
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Kaylee- get Montana Natural Beef study, set up meeting with Heather

Janet has the money for match, they'll do an RFP to find the contractor for writing it

The food sovereignty group found that food costs went up, and that most of the reservations food is being trucked in.

Develop form letter for producers and buyers. Producer letters from: Joel, Zim, Jace, Deb, Pete, Anita, Jerry Hamel, Leonard Pierce

Tom McDonald with bison- need to figure out volume

We have volume data from the producers survey, and we know that tribal entities purchase 21,000 lbs of beef.

Gaming, Two Eagle, and SKC could sign letters of support that they'd buy beef and bison at the right price.

Wednesdays at 1pm- weekly meeting