



McNeill says she wants consumers to understand that beef fits with the recommendation for lean protein and nutrient rich foods.

“Lean beef is a solution for managing weight,” she says. “Beef offers 29 lean cuts to choose from and, on average, one 3-ounce (oz.) serving of lean beef provides 10 essential nutrients and about 154 calories.” Among the lean cuts are sirloin, flank steak, T-bone steak and 95% lean ground beef.

McNeill also emphasizes that lean beef can help trim calories. Particularly, McNeill says it is not uncommon for people today to be overfed but undernourished due to eating calories that lack nutrition.

“Lean beef is a solution that satisfies our appetites and provides more nutrients for fewer calories than many other foods,” she notes. It can take two to three times more calories to get the same amount of protein from many plant-based alternatives than from lean beef.

McNeill clarifies two additional points from the guidelines:

She notes that U.S. consumers are not overconsuming red meat. Statistics reveal that on average, U.S. consumers eat 1.7 oz. of U.S. beef daily. Currently, government guidance to consumers is to eat 5 to 7 oz. from the protein group daily.

Secondly, McNeill says that while the recommendations suggest increasing the amount of fish in the diet, it does not mean cutting back on lean beef. McNeill believes there is room for both.

“Both sources of protein offer unique yet equally important nutrients,” she says. “Beef is a leading source of several nutrients, including protein, iron and zinc, while cold-water fish, like salmon, are among top sources of omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin D.”

Promoting lean beef

In context of the newly released *Dietary Guidelines*, Kim Essex, NCBA senior vice president for consumer marketing, says the beef industry’s checkoff-funded marketing efforts will continue with an emphasis on lean.

She notes a checkoff-funded study that revealed 69% of consumers say buying lean cuts of meat is the most important thing to consider when shopping for food.

Essex adds, “Lean is a permission word. Consumers love the beef product, but in an effort to be health-conscious they do hold back. Emphasizing beef’s 29 lean cuts gives them permission to go there.”

Presently, one check-off funded beef marketing campaign uses the tagline “29 Lean Cuts. One Powerful Protein.” The campaign,

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Newly released dietary guidelines include emphasis on “lean protein,” which means opportunities for beef’s 29 lean cuts to be a mainstay in healthy diets.

by *Kindra Gordon*

Consumers can continue to choose lean beef as part of a healthy diet. That’s the take-home message the beef industry hopes consumers will remember from the new *Dietary Guidelines* that were unveiled in late January.

Issued jointly by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the *Dietary Guidelines* are updated every five years under a Congressional mandate. The updates are based on recommendations from an esteemed 13-member advisory committee of nutrition and medical experts who conduct an extensive review of published scientific and medical research and set the guidelines in an effort to promote health, reduce the risk of chronic diseases and reduce the prevalence of obesity through improved nutrition and physical activity.

The 2010 guidelines — which were actually released in January 2011 — emphasize two primary concepts:

- ▶ balancing calories with physical activity, and
- ▶ encouraging consumption of nutrient-dense foods and beverages.

Specifically among the recommendations consumers are encouraged to: “Choose a variety of protein foods, which include seafood, lean meat and poultry, eggs, beans and peas, soy products, and unsalted nuts and seeds.”

Beef fits

Shalene McNeill, executive director of nutrition research for the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA), is pleased that protein was highlighted in the new recommendations.

“For the first time, the Nutrition Guidelines Committee has taken the conversation beyond fat and focused on the science that shows protein plays an important role in a healthy, well-balanced diet,” McNeill says. She credits the beef checkoff with helping change the nutritional conversation during the last five to eight years and driving the scientific research to document the role of lean beef in healthy diets.

6 dietary tips

Among the recommendations for consumers from the 2010 *Dietary Guidelines* are the following diet tips:

- ▶ Enjoy your food, but eat less.
- ▶ Avoid oversized portions.
- ▶ Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.
- ▶ Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.
- ▶ Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread and frozen meals — and choose the foods with lower numbers.
- ▶ Drink water instead of sugary drinks.

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which is being used in print, radio and billboard formats, features the nutritional benefits and versatility of six lean beef favorites: T-Bone steak, filet, top sirloin, strip steak, top round and 95% lean ground beef.

“This campaign sheds light on the variety of lean beef choices out there, as well as how they can be a part of a delicious family meal,” says Essex.

Also in the effort to help consumers identify lean beef, consumers will now find the American Heart Association’s (AHA)

heart-check mark on three beef cuts in the meatcase. This program places the association’s heart-check mark on food packages that meet criteria for low saturated fat and cholesterol.

The three beef cuts that met the American Heart Association’s criteria for extra lean include the:

- ▶ boneless top sirloin petite roast (Select grade);
- ▶ top sirloin filet (Select grade); and
- ▶ top sirloin kabob (Select grade).

The AHA certification allows retailers to display the heart-check mark on fresh case beef packages, promoting the health benefits of a serving of these particular beef cuts to their customers. The mark has been shown to influence sales by as much as 5%. By making this program available to retailers, the beef checkoff is putting beef’s healthy story right in the meatcase where consumers make their meal decision. As part of the integrated promotions, a comprehensive campaign, including on-pack labels and recipes, will be

conducted to help drive awareness and traffic to the lean beef cuts in the meatcase.

Certification for additional extra-lean beef cuts is being sought from AHA as well.

In addition to these efforts, Essex affirms that the beef industry is continuing to keep health, nutrition and beef research information in front of health professionals who influence dietary recommendations to consumers.



Marathon runner helps share beef's nutritional message

If there is one thing Dane Rauschenberg likes to do, it is to run marathons. The well-known athlete boasts having run 52 marathons in 52 weeks, as well as a 202-mile solo run in less than 50 hours.

But Rauschenberg is developing a second passion — sharing his firm belief in incorporating beef into a well-balanced diet.

“I love beef,” Rauschenber says. “When I was running my 202-mile solo run, I was sending out live tweets. At mile 118, I tweeted, ‘I want a steak.’”

He adds, “I’m definitely a big fan of eating protein through beef, both before and after a race. I try to educate people that beef has a place in a well-balanced diet. This is something that works for me. You always hear about eating a lot of carbohydrates before a race, but for me, it’s protein. Beef isn’t the fatty thing it’s accused of being.”

Rauschenberg has joined fellow marathon runners and beef nutrition advocates as a member of checkoff-funded Team Beef, which helps tout the healthy messages about beef at marathon events around the country.