



Local  
Protein  
Initiative

@The Hardwick  
Area Food  
Pantry

City Market Seedling Grant 2024

# A bit about us

The Hardwick Area Food Pantry is a multi-site food share pantry with locations in Hardwick, Craftsbury and Albany Vermont.

Our mission is to expand food access and choice in our region.

We believe nourishing food for all is central to community vitality.

We are committed to partnerships, dignity and care.



# Everyone Needs Protein

At the Hardwick Area Food Pantry, and across the food assistance community, we are grappling with:

- \*Increased Need
- \*Rising Costs
- \*Decreased Free Food Resources

Protein sources, such as eggs, cheese, meat, beans, nuts, mushrooms and meat are the most expensive items in our food budget.



# Local Protein

Located in the rich agricultural region of the Northeast Kingdom, our food share sites are often stocked with local veggies, and occasionally local eggs, cheeses and milk, in addition to the usual staples. From the beginning meat was an issue, both for our budget and in our ability to find high quality options. Through conversations between volunteers and participants we began to wonder....**Could we raise beef for the food shares at a price point that the pantry could afford?**



# Our Own “Pantry Beef”

With the support of City Market’s Seedling Grant & funds from Craftsbury Neighbor to Neighbor Task Force we were able to run a pilot program to research the cost of raising and processing our own beef for the pantry.



According to the numbers.....

In total we raised **3 calves**

They produced **829# of ground beef**

At an average of **\$2.40/pound \***

\*These were the costs to the pantry for the beef received, and were possible due to in-kind donations of animals, transportation and care.

If we account for those costs the meat comes in at an average of **\$3.80/pound**



# More Experimentation

For comparison, we also pastured two retired dairy cows over a summer and processed their meat for the pantry.

This meat, **643#**

Cost the pantry an average  
of **\$5.86/pound**.

And a “meat breed” yearling,  
raised for one year yielded  
**403#** at **\$4.26/pound**



**In total the Hardwick Area Food Pantry has raised 1,872# of beef!**

# Apples and Oranges...but a win for the Food Shares!

## Positive Outcomes:

- 1,872# of Local Beef for the pantry
- Creative collaborative relationships formed between farmers and pantry
- Equitable participation in the region's agricultural abundance

## Unexpected Surprises:

- Donations of animals: 2 pigs that provided 245# of pork
- Donation of a ½ cow: provided 186# of beef
- Donations from neighbor's freezers: provided additional 40# of beef and 30# venison



## Responses to the Project:

"I'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO AFFORD BUYING LOCAL MEAT"

-FOOD SHARE VISITOR

"IS THERE ANY MORE OF "OUR" PANTRY BEEF?"

-FOOD SHARE VISITOR

"ANOTHER VISITOR ASKED IF WE HAD ANY MORE OF "OUR" PANTRY BEEF....

THIS FEELS SO GREAT!"

-FOOD SHARE VOLUNTEER

# Whats Next?



- We plan to acquire two more cattle in the spring, and to continue to raise a portion of the Hardwick Area Food Pantry's meat.
- We plan to expand outreach to local farms and homesteads who might consider raising an extra animal with their own herd.
- We plan to increase awareness within the community, that the pantry will except meat donations, and can give out meat packaged as "Not for Sale"
- Although we focused on beef production during this pilot project, we would like to explore ways to raise other protein sources, including vegetarian options.

# Thank you City Market!

On behalf of the  
Hardwick Area Food Pantry



Hardwick\*Craftsbury\*Albany