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Interview with Dale Philips

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Researchers Name: Tim Greenwood
Event: Interview with Dale Philips
Place: Philips Meat Processing Plant Zanesville, Ohio
Co-workers Present: none

This is Timothy Greenwood , interviewing the people of the Philips Meat Processing Plant in Zanesville, Ohio. It is February 16, 2007 at 9am. We are going to be talking about the cattle production and the beef and the future of the local food systems.

TG: What all do you guys process here?

Dpjr: Everything from beef, hogs, sheeps, goats, deer...pretty much anything

TG: How often do you get stuff in, every week?

Dpjr: We slaughter on Fridays, we receive everything in on Thursdays then we have to divide some stuff that we can't get ourselves

TG: Any specific cuts of meat, like grass fed or anything like that?

Dpjr: we usually cut choice that's the kind of product we try to put out

TG: how many industries or corporations do you do custom cuts for?

Dpjr: during the normal week we do about fifteen custom cuts of beef and usually one of them goes to one person.

TG: what process do you guys use to kill?

Dpjr: we have a stun gun that knocks them out. Then we rig'em up and bleed them out and we skin everything, we don't skull them.

TG: so you guys do wholesale here too?

Dpjr: yeah, we have a full service here. We do bolognas, bacons, boneless hams, hot dogs everything like that

TG: How much does the cow average?

Dpjr: the average fat steer averages around 600 pounds. And thats hanging.

TG: How many pounds of meat do you get out of that ?

Dpjr: Depends on the way you get cut with some bone you are going to get more. Without you are going to get less. They same from live weight to animal packing that its somewhere around thirty percent. That different on every animal.

TG: is there any specific animal that is more tough to process?

Dpjr: lambs....they are tougher for us, over here just because we do them that much. We don't have a set way of doing things with them like we have doing with beef and hogs.

TG: how many heads do you get in monthly?

Dpjr: depending on the time of the year , I want to say we do around sixty beef. And in the late summer we can do up to a hundred hogs. It just depends on the time of year. Its real seasonal work

TG: do you guys get a lot of retail out front?

Dpjr: retail traffic, yeah, its grown, a lot of people didn't know we were out here and we had a retail shop, but it has really grown.

TG: do you have a specific process for people who come out here, like the FDA and such?

Dpjr: yeah, we have a full time state inspector. He is here everyday.

TG: what process do you have to go about cleaning all the materials?

Dpjr: well, we are under SSOP standards operations and procedure, we have to go through every morning and check through every piece of equipment. Then it is checked, and if it fails you have to re-clean it and then it gets tested again.

TG: How big is the whole operations?

Dpjr: as far as employees?

TG: Employees, size, everything

Dpjr: We are considered a small processor, but we are right in the middle. You don't want to go up or down. You go up and it gets a little harder to process. But we got about 15 employees and that's enough to get everything done. I could see in the future we could have to expand

TG: Are you definitely looking towards expansion?

Dpjr: Definitely we are always looking for new business. Being a small business like this there is a lot of competition out there and a lot of overhead. You cant turn anything down.

TG: you said that's the hot dog, sausage links maker?

Dpjr: yeah that machine make hot dogs, smoked sausage, bratwurst, anything like that. That machine has the capability of doing. Its all computerized so you get the exact size of each individual link you want. Its simple but complex.

TG: and this is for the packaging?

Dpjr: Yeah this does all the packaging and paper wrapping, it sucks all the air out and helps preserve the meat. we use to have a paper wrapper, we will never go back to that. This give it more shelf life

TG: How big is the whole property of this complex?

Dpjr: I am not sure what the dimensions are. I think the original building is 24' x 36', I would guess we are 80'x 60' but, not big enough.

TG: How long does it take slaughtering, or separating the meats from the cattle?

Dpjr: we can do, I like to do 1000 pounds an hour, sometimes that's a tall order but we try to stay around there. We started out and we were happy to get one beef an hour. But now we are up to where we can get 1000 pounds an hour.

TG: is there any specific methods.....

Dpjr: there he is

DP: Dale Phillips

TG: Tim Greenwood

DP: pleased to meet you

TG: nice to meet you

DP: I am a pit guy now, I change tires

TG: just out working?

DP: So what have you seen?

TG: he showed me around, he showed me the coolers, the kill floor

DP: we can walk back here

DP: This is the smoker or the smokehouse, turkey here is what we are cooking.

TG: ok

Dp: I can take you back in here and show you what we got. This is our chill house. According to regulations we have to chill meats to a certain temperature after they come out of the smokehouse. We can go on back here.

TG: what temperature do you have to have everything chilled down to

DP: the cooler runs about 33 degrees, it's a blast chiller, we have extra fans and everything in there. The meat state regulations but the temperatures differ according to state regulations maybe, hams got 5 hours to get from 180 to 40 or 10 hours to get from 80 to 40. It just depends on the product.

TG: is there anything special about the smoker?

DP: we there is, for like hot dogs there is the rapid chill, which we have a total of 6 hours to do that and we do about 15 minutes to get it actually down to temperature but it works out. It works out really well

DP: Do you have any questions about this at all?

TG: no, not so much

DP: this is the computer that runs the smokehouse, and you can buy a bunch of programs. Depending on what you want to cook. You just stick a probe in the meat for internal temperature and the computer does the rest.

Inaudible:.....

DP: what is it that you guys are looking for?

TG: we are interviewing local farmers and local processors, and we are just try to catalog, basically, like a head of cattle from the farm to the table and the processes it goes through. That is pretty much what we are trying to find out from the farmers point of view.

DP: do you have to have some kind of report or something?

TG: a write up

DP: we can talk in the office

DP: I will just give you the process as far as we go through receiving the animal and you can stop me or just pick and choose what you want.... Now actually what we do is from the very beginning we just schedule the beef in, you know the farmer calls us and says we got such and such. When the animal comes in we will take it and give it a number and then that

number we will use through out the whole process. And then we will name it. And from that point we will take it from our holding pins and take it to our knock shoots.....did he explain how that was done?

TG: yeah

TG: How many heads of cattle can you hold in the holding pins?

DP: in the holding pins? We can hold about 20 head . And we typically do about 12 to 15 a week, with the exception of this week when the weather killed us. And hogs we can hold another, depending on, another 20-25 hogs in there. Most of the stuff we do is custom stuff. Most of what we do is freezer beef. So then we hang it and let it age for about ten days on beef. And hogs we cut in three days. It doesn't require aging on pork, after that we process it. Cut to order, we have an order sheet of how that is done. We cut it there and freeze it.

TG: is there any specific amount of how many cuts a head can give?

DP: its pretty much what the individual wants. These are form we use as far as the processing, as far as the cuts and that kind of stuff. You are welcome to have these.

TG: thank you

DP:I don't know if that will help you or not?

TG: how much does the average cow or steer weigh?

DP: a steer from a 1000 to 1500 pounds, from the custom side of it, it will dress on the average around 60% of the live weight and that will determine the live weight. And that will determine the weight it is going into the cooler. From that point then you got fat on it and bones in it. When you take a 1000 pounds of beef on average the finished product going out the doors is about 35%. If you took about 1000 pounds of edible product trimmed and de-boned or whatever I might be you will get about 350 pounds out of that 1000 pounds

DP: is it a culinary arts school?

TG: no, its just a liberal arts college and we happened to be doing a project on seeing the... we are trying to do a local food initiative to see where our food comes from. And we are trying to get more people to use and buy locally. And my process is first I met with a farmer, then a processor, the packaging then the consumer

DP: as far as state regulations we are a federally inspected plant. We are under what we call HASSUP it is a system of checks and balances and this process eventually will come from the farmer to the table, you have probably heard some things about I.D.ing animals and that is a part of that process. They havent accomplished all of that yet, its going to be pretty difficult to do. But as far as our process and with the state processing, we are up and

running we are doing well with that.

TG: do you have any schools or large corporations that you sell to?

DP: I sell to the local elementary school, I sell hot dogs to them, and I probably have 80 accounts with grocery stores and restaurants, you know that kind of thing. We sale to some nursing homes. We did supply meat for the prisons, when our wonderful governor taft was in office he built a processing plant and all of us small guys lost all of our contracts to that... which I am not happy about. But I suppose there is some merit in what he done but I am still not a fan of it .

TG: I can understand

DP: Does your college, do they do this beef and hogs?

TG: they do get some local

DP: I heard through the grapevine, that a local processor was doing some meat for them, and they are having it killed one place hauled down to another place and they are processing it then hauling it back and I can do that in one. And so I had a message from Melonie in the kitchen

TG: are you a part of any associations, like the Ohio farmers or anything like that.

DP: No, I used to be in farm bureau but I kind of dropped out of that. I used to do some farming but then I built this plant and now I am kind of done with all that. I am not really in any organization like that anymore

DP: right now we are just killing one day a week but if we get really busy we can do two days or however many days. We have been up to three days killing. That just means that we are operating at maximum capacity. As it is right now its kind of slowing down do to the weather, but it is tough for a small processor to make it. The small farmer is disappearing. When I started I had 12 different farmers that I could buy hogs from, and I bought from each one of them at different times, now I have three. And there is one of them talking about getting out of it and that is a real shame. Something really needs to be done to help the small farmer. To me it's the backbone of America... the small places, yeah the big places have the money but it is the little guy that makes things go. Right now we've got 4 dollar corn and hogs are at .42 cents. So hogs are down and corn is up. The two don't match. So you know the little guys can't survive that. So were are you from?

TG: Cleveland

DP: I have a brother who lives in Cleveland. Yeah the buckeyes had a hell of an accomplishment.

TG: Yeah. Would it be ok if I had anymore questions that I could contact you?

DP: sure, here is my card . Do you know of anyone who I could get in contact with about

getting into the dining halls?

TG: Sure. My professor. He would probably be the person to get in contact with.

DP: ok. Well here is my card for you and one for him

TG: well, thank you and thank you for your time

DP: anytime