HANDLING BEEF SAFELY

- Raw beef is associated with bacteria that can cause foodborne illness.
- Make sure to wash hands thoroughly before and after handling.
- Cleaning and sanitize surfaces after contact with raw foods. Use separate utensils and cutting boards for raw and ready-to-eat or cooked foods.
- For food safety, all whole cuts of beef should be cooked to an internal temperature of 145°F for 15 seconds and ground beef should be cooked to 155°F for 17 seconds.

TRANSPORTING RAW BEEF

- Bring a secondary container or place cases of meat in an area of your vehicle that can be be easily cleaned and sanitized in case of leaks. Alternatively, lay down a towel or blanket that can be washed.
- Bring a cooler and ice packs if traveling a long distance to purchase to keep beef products at or below 41°F.
- Wash your hands or use hand sanitizer after handling boxes.

STORING BEEF

- Harmful bacteria grow fastest between 41°F and 135°F. Minimizing time in this range reduces growth of these harmful bacteria.
- Raw beef can be stored in the refrigerator at 41°F or below, and will maintain quality for about 7 days.
- Cooked beef stored at 41°F or below should be consumed within seven days for safety.
- Frozen food can be safely stored indefinitely, but quality will eventually decline.
- For best quality, use frozen beef within the following time frames:
  - Ground 3 - 4 months
  - Roasts 4 - 12 months
  - Steaks 6 - 12 months
  - Cooked 2 - 3 months

FREEZING TIPS

- Freeze beef as soon as possible
- Always work with clean hands, preparation areas, equipment and utensils
- Quality can be extended by storing at 0°F or lower and packaging for frozen storage.
- Choose containers or wraps appropriate for freezing: freezer foil, wrap or bags, plastic freezing containers
- To prep for freezing:
  a. Ideally wrap first in a layer of plastic wrap or freezer paper, then a layer of foil, then store in a freezer bag or plastic container
  b. Multiple layers will help maintain quality and prevent freezer burn
  c. Wrap tightly, pressing out as much air as possible
- Consider freezing beef in portions so that you only need to defrost what is immediately needed
- Clean and sanitize equipment and surfaces after breaking down and packaging beef.

Created April 17, 2020
Reviewed April 21, 2021