

Meet the meat trekkers

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26 Jul 2017

People are deserting retail stores' butchery aisles, cutting out the middleman and turning to buying meat in bulk. Seemingly, it is proving to be a great saving.



Image credit: Alon Skuy via *Times Live*

"If I were to buy the same amount of meat at retail stores, I'd need a loan the following day, meat is so expensive," says Bongani Qansane, of Germiston, who spends R1500 a month on meat.

"Once a month I make the trip to Heidelberg. There's an Eskort butchery where I get my pork cheaper than at retail shops, and I go to a Karan Beef butchery in the same area for beef and mutton. It's great value for money."

Sipho Dube teams up with a friend to buy wholesale. "I spend R400 a month and an additional R40 for fuel so I'm saving big time."

A mother of two says she travels close to an hour with her friends every two months to Eskort. "We buy and freeze," she said, estimating that she spent 40% less than she would pay in retail shops. Not only is the meat cheap, it's fresh. I'm glad I made this decision."

Pieter Prinsloo, of the Red Meat Producers' Organisation, said last year's drought contributed significantly to the increase

in meat prices. He said meat was more expensive at retail shops because "it's convenience shopping".

"If you take lamb, for example, you can buy it wholesale for around R70 a kilogramme. The cheapest at a retailer would be about R99 a kilogramme. You can buy beef wholesale from a farmer for R48 a kilogramme. That will give you a 30% saving," he said.

Zeyn Adrian Jenkins, of Durban, said he paid around R350 for 10kg of chicken quarters in Durban. "It's R200 in Pietermaritzburg and Port Shepstone."

For six Soweto women, bulk buying allows them to keep meat on their tables for longer. Thoko Nkosi explained that they put away R150 a month for 11 months. Come the festive season, they can afford to stock up on meat.

"Last year, we were able to buy a beast for about R6,000 and we told the butcher how we wanted it cut. We all walked away with different cuts of meat - from @ rump steak to T-bone steak," Nkosi said.

"If I hadn't joined the group and I walked into a [retailer] with R1,600, I would only get enough meat to last me about two months."

The Times found stewing beef at a City Deep wholesaler in Johannesburg was priced at R65.95 a kilogramme. Pick n Pay sold it for R79.99. It went for the same price at Spar and Checkers sold it for R10 more. A kilogramme of brisket was sold for R65.95 at the wholesalers, for R87.99 at Pick n Pay, R92.99 at Checkers and R98.99 at Spar.

An Alberton butcher said it was important to note that it was not only the price of meat that could differ from one place to another but also the cut and grade.

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