

Meat Consumption and Raising Livestock on Personal Farming Plots

07.12.2006 [report] [Population Poll]

Nation-wide home interviews conducted **December 2-3 2006** in **100** residencies in **44** regions. A sample size of **1500** respondents. The margin of error does not exceed **3,6%**.

According to the latest poll, most Russians (51%) report eating meat or meat products almost every day; 34% eat it once or twice a week, 10% once or twice a month, 2% once a year, and 3% don't eat meat at all. The rate of meat consumption strongly correlates to income levels: 40% of families with monthly per capita incomes under 3,999 rubles eat meat on a daily basis, as do 62% of those with higher earnings. In Moscow, where the income levels are traditionally believed to be the highest in the country, daily consumption of meat does not significantly exceed the mean figures (59%) while it reaches 70% in other large cities. Conversely, villagers are less likely than city dwellers to eat meat every day (42%).

Fifty-three percent of Russians say they eat meat whenever they like and 43% restrict their consumption. Most respondents (79% or 34% of the total sample) restrict meat consumption for financial reasons. Another 12% of those restricting themselves to meat (5%) say they do so for financial and other reasons equally. The same percentage of respondents restrict their consumption of meat for religious reasons, because they are vegetarians or because of health problems.

According to the same poll findings, thirty-eight percent of Russians own personal farming plots, including backyards and plots of land outside their villages. Muscovites account for 20% of owners of personal farming plots, while villagers comprise 70%. About half of the farmers (52%) grow livestock or poultry (20% of the total sample), and this figure is slightly higher in rural areas (55%). Even among Muscovites, those who raise livestock account for 4%. Chicken is the most common type of poultry raised on personal farming plots (15%), followed by cows and pigs (8% each), water fowl (5%), goats and sheep, and rabbits (2% each), with horses, turkeys or ostriches closing the list (1%).

Most farming plot owners (65% or 13% of the sample) say they face problems raising livestock, and 35% (7% of the sample) report no such problems. As many as 16% of those who keep animals on their farms agreed to specify those problems. They said their biggest problem is the high cost of feed (12%). Other problems involve the lack of feed transportation, animal illnesses and the high cost of treating them, and lack of facilities for raising animals (1% each).

The problems cited by farmers clearly explain why raising livestock on personal farming plots is not profitable. Seventy-five percent of respondents (or 15% of the sample) raise livestock only for own consumption, with 25% (4% of the sample) selling at least some of the meat they produce. About one-quarter of meat producers sell their goods at food markets, while others market their meat in different ways by supplying it to meat-processing plants, dealers, catering establishments etc.

Low purchase prices for meat is obviously the greatest problem facing small farms nowadays and is mentioned in 2% of responses. Other respondents complain of dealers forcing prices down and occupying stalls in the marketplace (1% each), corrupt veterinarians, lack of transportation and poverty among potential consumers.

Svetlana Klimova