Excerpts from the OE entries for *beef, mutton, pork, and veal*, giving the principal meanings of each and their earliest attestations.

Don Ringe, December 2006

**beef**

1. The flesh of an ox, bull, or cow, used as food.
   
   *a* 1300 *K. Alis.* 5248 To mete was greithed beef and motoun. *c* 1350 *Will. Palerne* 1849 Fair bouf wel sode. *c* 1386 *CHAUCER Merch. Tale* 176 Bet than olde boef is tendre vel.

2. An ox; any animal of the ox kind; *esp.* a fattened beast, or its carcase.
   
   *c* 1320 *Seuyn Sag.* (W.) Hit mote both drink and ete … Beues flesch, and drink the brotht. 1475 *Bk. Noblesse* 68 Grete providence of vitaille of cornys, of larde, and beoffes.

3. The supply of beeses and grain for his household. 1884 All the beoffs that are ready for shipping.

**mutton**

1. The flesh of sheep, used as food.
   
   *c* 1290 *S. Eng. Leg.* I 472/344 Huy nomen with heom in heore schip al þat hem was leof, Gies and hennes, craunes and swannes and porc, motoun, and beof. *c* 1375 *Sc. Leg. Saints xxv. (Julian)* 114 Sancte Julyane … In til his tyme wes na glotone, na wont wes nocht to ete motone. *c* 1420 *Liber Cocorum* (1862) 46 Take fresshe brothe of motene clene.

2. A sheep; *esp.* one intended to be eaten.

1338 R. *BRUNNE Chron.* (1810) 174 A bouke of a motoun. 1390 *GOWER Conf.* I 39 The Wolf in pes with the Moltoun.

**pork**

†1. A swine, a hog, a pig.

?a 1400 *Morte Arth.* 3122 Pouerall and pastorelles passede on aftyre, With porkes to pasture at the price ʒates. *c* 1400 *Destr. Troy* 3837 Polidarius was pluccid as a porke fat.

[Last non-dialect prose citation is 1682.]
2. The flesh of swine used as food; *spec.* the fresh flesh.

*c* 1290 *S. Eng. Leg.* I 472/344 Huy nomen with heom in heore schip … porc, motoun, and beof. 1398 *Trevisa Barth. de P. R.* XVIII.vii. (Bodl. MS) lf. 246 b/1 Boores flesche is more hard and drye … ðan tame porke.

**veal**

1. The flesh of a calf as an article of diet.

*c* 1386 *Chaucer Merch. Tale* 176 ‘Bet is,’ quod he, ‘a pyk than a pikerell, And bet than olde boef is the tendre vel.’ *c* 1400 *Maundev. (1839)* vi. 72 Thei eten but lytille or non of Flessche of Veel or of Beef. *c* 1420 *Liber Cocorum* (1862) 28 A sawce hit is For vele and venyson, iwys.

2. A calf, esp. as killed for food or intended for this purpose.