

A final feast

Farm slaughtering in rural Rhineland

Draft animals such as cattle and oxen played an important role during the harvest. However, feeding these animals during the barren winter months meant additional work and costs. After the harvest, it was therefore time for slaughter.

Depending on the region, there were fixed slaughter dates. In the Xanten area, these were around All Saints' Day and Christmas. Only animals that were no longer needed for breeding or work were slaughtered. Mostly cattle, pigs and poultry were slaughtered. Slaughtering usually took place on the farm itself.

Slaughter day was a festive occasion for the rural population, as fresh meat was not an everyday commodity. Most of the meat was preserved for storage. This included processing it into sausage, curing it and smoking it.