

Harmony Valley Farm & Deer Run Farm Create **Grazier's Organic Beef**

These family-run farms have joined together to create a holistic farm system based on the Western Wisconsin formula. We combine our pasture resources, the cow and calf herd residing on pastures at Deer Run, the largest yearlings summering at Harmony Valley, and all over-wintering taking place at Deer Run's facilities. It is our goal to produce high quality, healthy, great tasting meat out of our lush grass and alfalfa. Here's our formula.

Genetics

The Angus breed is known internationally for its high quality meat. We agree, Angus beef can't be beat, but the modern Angus breed has strayed genetically from the pastures it once fed on to become a meat machine that lives on the grain of the feedlot. The Angus cattle in the Grazier's herd come from an old line of Angus bred and improved for a lifetime by the Argyle Skolos family of Coon Valley, Wisconsin.



Twenty years ago Deer Run used this breeding to build a herd of registered animals with the ability to thrive on grass, legume pasture and hay. This produces healthy cattle that do what cattle do naturally, convert pastures into meat and milk. And it provides an environmentally responsible way to make our hilly Western Wisconsin farms productive.



Herd Health

Our high-forage feeding method is the foundation for the health program at Deer Run. Cows naturally develop strong immune systems with the low stress diet and healthy conditions of clean pastures for the majority of the year and dry, open housing in the few cold and inclement weeks of winter.

The best hay from the farm serves as winter diet. Energy and growth needs are supplemented with organic grain, also from the farm. In addition, they are fed pro-biotic compound to assure the growth of natural beneficial bacteria in their digestive tract along with diatomaceous earth (DE) as a non-chemical intestinal cleanser.

In addition, no new cattle have been brought onto the farm for many years. This isolates the cow/calf herd from externally introduced cattle pathogens. The breeding, handling and feeding management plan therefore results in a healthier animal, which allows the elimination of antibiotic-based health management in favor of the occasional use of more natural healing methods.

Grazier's Organic Beef

is more affordable than most naturally raised, pastured, or certified organic beef . We sell directly to the families who enjoy our beef. We sell in packages, rather than by the cut, reducing waste and handling. We pass the savings on to our valued customers.

Most purchase Grazier's Organic Beef over and over again, satisfied with the value, variety and quality.

Diet

Spring brings the flush of Western Wisconsin pastures! Calves are born on pasture and are fed to completion on pastures, with just the right amount of organic grain supplement to produce a lean but tender, tasty meat. Finishing calves this way makes a difference in the meat produced. It is the kind of meat our family likes to eat, delicious and not overly fat. And there is an important bonus in quality: there is recent research concluding that meat from pasture raised animals is lower in fat and calories but higher in key vitamins such as beta-carotene and vitamin E. What's more, it is a source of beneficial fats such as omega-3 fatty acid and conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) – nutrients shown to lower risk of cardiovascular disease.



Certified Organic

Deer Run cattle are organically certified. Organic certification means no hormones, no antibiotics and no chemical parasite treatment. The administering of all of these is common practice in conventional meat production. In those systems, feedlot animals are totally grain-fed in high-density environments and implanted with hormones to “push” weight gain. Stress is significantly higher and immune response weaker. Antibiotics are fed to counteract the negative response.

Small Scale Processing and Handling

We have selected a family operated, federally licensed and inspected plant to process the beef. The inspector is always present and instead of being responsible for hundreds of carcasses, as in most large processing plants, he handles a maximum of 10 animals per day at this facility. The plant handles all our processing needs in accordance with certified organic standards and it all carries the USDA Organic seal. Harmony Valley has trusted beef processing to this plant for over 15 years and their sanitation standards, their skill and knowledge impress us.

Why our families eat Grazier's Organic Angus

The recent case of BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy or Mad Cow Disease) is receiving a large and appropriate amount of news coverage. While the USDA has declared that the nation's beef supply is safe despite this event, time will tell if this is factually supported. There are some observers who believe that industry practices currently used to conventionally produce beef are highly risky. They point to experiences in other countries and to emerging science on BSE to support their opinion. In any event, this case indicates a breakdown in the conventional food chain for meat in our country. Hopefully it will lead to better industry practices. It underscores one of the reasons for all of us to buy food from sources we know.

This letter is an effort to give you some knowledge about **Graziers Organic Beef** around the subject of BSE so you can make a fact-based decision about using the product. Let's start out with some background on BSE and conventional beef production.

The problem of BSE came on the media scene in the 1990's in UK. There was an unusual occurrence of a human disease called Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (CJD). It was determined that people who ate material from the nervous system of animals infected with BSE could contract CJD. BSE was known as a cattle disease involving abnormal proteins called prions in the nervous systems of cattle that deteriorated the brain and eventually killed the animal. Further it was determined that cattle contracted the disease from the practice of feeding protein supplements made from "rendering" of their fellow cattle, sheep or goats infected with BSE or Scrapies, the name for the disease in sheep and goats.

UK, most other European countries, and Japan quickly wrote law requiring:

- A complete ban on rendered cattle, sheep or goats (ruminants) as feed for *any* class of farm animal.
- Testing of cattle going into the food chain
- A rigorous birth to slaughter animal identification system.

The results of these measures have been very encouraging. The World Health Organization has recommended the procedures put in place in Europe be adopted worldwide.

The United States rejected these procedures. In 1997 USDA regulations banned feeding rendered ruminants to other ruminants but *allowed* feeding of such feed to poultry and hogs, thus risking it's accidental introduction into the feed sources for cattle when both feeds are formulated at the same plant. Our government also rejected a comprehensive program of BSE testing and has still not implemented a program for cattle identification.

You might ask why the US government would adopt such a risky and irresponsible position with respect to food safety. The reason seems to be simple: money. There are strong corporate constituencies involved in each of these compromises.

- The pork and chicken industries in the US are vertically integrated — less than a half dozen well-known food companies control it. Both swine and chicken need high-protein diets and rendered ruminant animals provide a very cheap source. Therefore, the companies lobbied to keep the feed available.
- Comprehensive testing of cattle destined for the food supply would add about 6-10 cents per pound of beef that would be passed on to consumers. In the USA about 90% of beef is processed by three companies. They have strongly resisted (lobbied against) this, claiming it would be expecting the impossible. At this time Japan tests all its beef, the US tests less than 1 %.
- The farm subsidy bill of 2002 mandated that the country of origin be shown on all beef. Under pressure from consumer and farm groups USDA got around to proposing regulations for public comment in December of 2003. While this labeling is a far less rigorous form of animal identification than that used in Europe it has still been strongly resisted by the same processors mentioned above on the grounds that it would add to the cost of beef. However, there is another obvious reason for the resistance: as things stand now these processors can import beef from any country at their convenience if US beef becomes "too expensive." This gives them strong price leverage over US producers, but does not create any marketplace disadvantage with consumers, since consumers can not identify imported beef from US beef.

While USDA has not embraced the WHO suggestions, as stated above, it has outlawed use of ruminant-derived protein supplements for ruminants. However there are compliance violations. Since the ban became law, GAO, the investigative arm of Congress, has twice criticized enforcement of the ban as being too lax. This is not surprising. Enforcement money is scarce and the players in the raising and processing of beef have no monetary incentive to follow the regulations. With supplements for both beef animals and other classes of livestock being produced in the same facilities it is only a matter of time for banned ingredients to be intermingled mistakenly, or intentionally, into cattle feed.

So, with protein supplemental feed being a possible source of BSE infection, one might ask if all conventionally raised beef cattle are fed protein supplements. The answer is essentially, yes. Beef in the US comes from two general sources: animals raised for beef production and animals raised for milk production. Both streams of animals end up in our food chain as beef. The animals found with BSE in Washington State were from a dairy operation. Dairy animals need protein supplementation from birth until they are 3-4 months old because they do not receive mother-cow milk (it is being sold by the dairy farmer) and their digestive tracts are not developed enough to metabolize grass or legumes as a natural source of protein. Cattle raised primarily for beef receive protein supplementation in the “finishing” stages, in the feedlot. Because the ration in a feedlot is largely grain, protein supplementation is needed.

The final stage of beef production – the slaughter and cutting of meat, can also be a source of contamination. There is a meat processing method used in the US for conventionally produced beef that increases the risk of nervous material being incorporated in hamburger and prepared meats like hot dogs. It is the aggressive removal of meat from bone using mechanical means. The problem is that when removing meat from soft bones, like ribs, with a machine, particles of bone and nervous tissue can easily be included in the edible product.

Indications are that USDA will improve the safety net for beef due to the recent cases of BSE. There is some talk of a system of animal identification. There is talk of excluding obviously sick animals from the human food chain and testing all of them for BSE. But bottom line is that it is unlikely the US will have programs as robust as those suggested by WHO.

We’d like to make a clear distinction between the way we raise and process **Grazier’s Organic Angus** and the way conventional beef is produced. The production methods used for **Grazier’s Organic** are simple, yet as robust as those recommended by the WHO, and assure you of beef that is not only safe from BSE but wholesome and tastes like beef.

Grazier’s Organic Beef is produced solely by two family farms – Harmony Valley Farm and Deer Run Farm – that have formed a partnership for this venture. Deer Run is the farm where the mother cowherd is kept and where the calves are born. The way we produce beef is considered old-fashioned compared to the way commercial beef is produced today. Cows, with their young calves at their sides, live their lives on pasture. Once weaned, the young cattle are grouped together in their own pasture. The foundation of the system is the cow’s unique ability to turn grass into protein – this has been the cow’s heritage through the many centuries since its domestication. Somehow this has been overlooked in North American animal agriculture where the concept of grain feeding was adopted in the last 50 years or so. Cynics say this was to support grain-focused agribusiness. Whatever the reason, it has made beef less healthy to eat, heavily marbled throughout the muscle with fat, and created animals that are more susceptible to disease.

Cattlemen began selecting animals best adapted to the new diet of grains to such an extent that we now have a national cowherd in US that virtually requires grain feeding to produce acceptable beef. Through luck or hard-headedness Deer Run has a herd in which the genetics are purebred Angus of a style and type from 50 years ago. The animals are bred for high production on pasture and stored pasture without the need for grain-based rations or protein supplementation. (Protein supplementation is the avenue of introduction for BSE.) An important aspect in all of this is that the animals have a very low level of *dietary* stress – the cows are eating what they were born and bred to eat.

Of course we have had to learn how to grow exceptionally nutritious pasture. The movement of some dairy farmers and some UW agricultural extension scientists to pasture-based systems has provided valuable know-how to us in the quest to produce and manage high quality pastures. A side benefit of well managed pastures is a dramatic increase in soil and wildlife conservation.

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To maintain our preferred old-fashioned cattle genetics and to minimize the possibility of introducing cattle diseases, we keep the herd “closed”. The foundation females came to Deer Run from only one herd 23 years ago – blood lines go back 75 years. Today every cow on the farm was born on the farm. No new animals will be brought in. This not only provides consistency and safety from communicable diseases such as hoof and mouth, but it greatly decreases the “social” stress constantly encountered by cattle raised in conventional methods which mix many animals together – something that triggers the stress to reestablish the pecking order in a herd. To support this stress reduction we select animals to remain in the herd that have gentle dispositions.

The focus on stress reduction may sound peculiar for cattle but it is one of the keys to organic production. Low stress means healthy immune systems. That, along with the practice of keeping new animals (and their foreign pathogens) off the farm, means healthy animals. Healthy mother cows live longer and have strong calves; healthy calves grow faster and don’t need medication, antibiotics or protein supplementation. The bottom line is that in our system these healthy, fast growing cattle produce safer and tastier meat without a regimen of hormones, medications and antibiotics.

Grazier’s Organic production and processing methods also assure that the meat you get is from an animal that has been produced by these methods. Our processor, Ledebuhr Meats, maintains the individual animal identification system that we put in place on the day of birth of each animal. All Grazier’s Organic meat is physically separated from all other product in the plant throughout the production process. This is a procedure that gives quality verification and is a requirement for organic certification.

We’re confident our beef is a wholesome product. It’s the brand of beef we feed our families and hope you make the same choice.

The **Grazier’s Organic** farming partners of
Deer Run Farm, Jim and Phylis Munsch and
Harmony Valley Farm

More information about BSE is available at :

www.sustainablenews.org/pages/issue_mad_ff.html

www.prwatch.org/books/mcusa.pdf (free, downloadable book, Mad Cow USA)

www.organicconsumers.org/madcow.htm

www.thematrix.com (just for fun)

Information about availability and prices of Grazier’s Organic Angus:

www.harmonyvalleyfarm.com