

# SUSTAINABLE FARMING

INCORPORATING AWA NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 2 | VOLUME 1 | FALL 2016

## A NEW GENERATION

FARM AND RANCH  
APPRENTICESHIPS

**PLUS**  
NEW GRASSFED DAIRY LABEL  
FOOD SAFETY AT THE MARKET  
LICE AND MITE CONTROL





# MEAT MATTERS



A new report from the respected Rabobank, a global leader in food and agri-finance, reveals per capita meat consumption in the U.S. rose by 5 percent in 2015—the biggest increase in over 40 years.

As the representative of an organization promoting high-welfare, sustainable food animal production, it's a challenging message. If the public continues to consume unsustainable levels of industrial meat, dairy and eggs, we're all in big trouble. While there's no doubt more people are waking up to the impacts of their food choices, I'd be a fool to think we've hit a turning point—or even that we're connecting with everyone we need to. Because we're not.

I have spent countless hours with journalists and leading food advocates alike, many of who seem to be going down the road of “all meat is bad,” explaining the differences between industrial and pasture-based production; that not all meat is bad; and how damaging uninformed attacks on ‘meat’ are for sustainable livestock farmers and ranchers. Feeding the world sustainably is a complex challenge, but there's no single-diet solution.

Yes, we need to end the unsustainable production and overconsumption of industrial meat: it's bad for animals, bad for us and bad for the planet. But we must not throw the baby out with the bathwater. Well-managed, pasture-raised livestock have a vital role to play in supplying high-quality food from land that would otherwise be far less productive, as well as vital services like carbon sequestration. And family farms are the very foundations of our rural communities.

The Rabobank report is a clarion call: despite the intense campaigns against meat, consumers haven't engaged. It's time to shift the conversation from “Should we produce meat?” to “How should we produce meat?”

We know food animals will play a vital role in feeding the world sustainably. We know nutritionally appropriate quantities of pasture-raised meat, eggs and dairy (as part of a balanced diet) provide significant health benefits, including a smorgasbord of essential micronutrients. And we also know more people will make sustainable food choices, given truthful information—and the opportunity to do so.

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Editor: Peter Mundy  
[info@agreenerworld.org](mailto:info@agreenerworld.org)  
Advertising  
[advertise@agreenerworld.org](mailto:advertise@agreenerworld.org)

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**A Greener World**  
PO Box 790  
Redmond  
OR 97756

800-373-8806

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# NEW DAIRY LABEL

AGW  
launches  
new  
grassfed  
standards  
for dairy  
cattle

Pure Éire Dairy in Othello, WA, is the first dairy cattle farm to be Certified Grassfed by A Greener World (AGW), following the introduction of AGW's new grassfed standards for dairy cattle.

Richard and Jill Smith established 300-acre Pure Éire Dairy (pronounced “air-uh”) in the heart of the Columbia Basin. The farm's Jersey dairy herd (pictured) is Certified AWA, Certified Organic and Non-GMO Project Verified—and now Certified Grassfed by AGW.

“We wanted a food label that would reflect our commitment to the health of our animals and set us apart in the grassfed market,” says Richard Smith of Pure Éire Dairy. “The new Certified Grassfed by AGW standards for dairy cattle show we're doing exactly what we say we're doing, according to the highest standards out there.”

Launched in August, Certified Grassfed by AGW for dairy cattle is an optional, additional accreditation for Certified AWA dairy cattle farmers. It is the only certification and logo in the U.S. and Canada that guarantees milk and dairy products come from cattle fed a 100 percent grass and forage diet, raised outdoors on pasture

or range for their entire lives and managed on an independent family farm according to the highest welfare and environmental standards.

Before introducing the new standards, AGW carried out a comprehensive analysis of best practices and the latest science on grassfed dairy cattle feeding and management to ensure the productivity and welfare of dairy cattle managed according to the standards. To be eligible to apply for the Certified Grassfed by AGW label, cattle dairies must be Certified AWA for at least one audit cycle, have been practicing 100 percent grassfed feeding for at least one year, and agree to undertake forage testing for each cut of hay, haylage, silage or baleage—whether home produced or bought-in.

“We are proud to announce Pure Éire Dairy as the first Certified Grassfed by AGW dairy operation and with it, introduce a new grassfed label that delivers real transparency and trust,” says Andrew Gunther, AGW's Executive Director.

For more information about AGW dairy certification, visit [animalwelfareapproved.org/standards/grassfed](http://animalwelfareapproved.org/standards/grassfed)



## IN THE NEWS...

### NEW FARMER FUNDING

Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced a new investment of \$17.8 million for 37 projects to help educate, mentor and enhance the sustainability of the next generation of farmers.

Meeting with new and beginning farmers at Iowa State University in August, Vilsack said the investment would be made through the existing USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program (BFRDP), which has invested more than \$126 million to over 250 projects targeting new and beginning farmers and ranchers since 2009.

### ASK DEAR AGGIE

AGW is launching a new online Q&A platform to help inform the public about agriculture.

Called ‘Dear Aggie,’ the new interactive platform will answer common questions about food and farming, as well as AGW's growing family of trusted certifications—including AWA, Certified Grassfed by AGW and Certified Non-GE by AGW. “We hope this service helps educate the public about where food comes from, as well as the specific benefits of AGW's various programs,” says Emily Moose, AGW's Director of Outreach.

Visit [agreenerworld.org/dear-aggie](http://agreenerworld.org/dear-aggie)

### BURGERS ON THE RISE

Demand for grassfed burgers is growing rapidly, according a leading market researcher. Mintel's *State of the Burger 2016* report reveals 79 percent of burger eaters agree grassfed beef is higher quality than conventional beef, with 43 percent wanting more grassfed burgers on menus. “Diners today are interested not only in food that is good for them; they also want food that makes them feel good,” says Mintel's Cayleb Bryant. “This is magnified for food that comes with a ‘story,’ as consumers increasingly want to know where their food was made and how it was prepared and produced.”

### SERENITY WINS A STEVIE

Serenity Acres Farm in Madison County, FL, has won a bronze Stevie® Award for its Certified AWA Serenity Acres Goat Milk Soaps and skincare product range.

Honoring organizations of all types and sizes, as well as the people behind them, the Stevie Awards recognizes outstanding performances in the workplace worldwide.

“Working with these wonderful goats brings out the love that creates our premium products that truly shine in competition,” says Julia Shewchuk, owner of Serenity Acres Farm. Congratulations!







# IN THE NEWS...

## CONSUMER WELFARE CONCERN, CONFUSION

Most Americans don't know the true meaning of food labels like "cage-free," "free-range" or "grass fed," while nearly three quarters of shoppers want farms to be audited by independent third parties to ensure high-welfare management, according to a new national survey.

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) commissioned Lake Research Partners to survey 1,000 American adults who purchase or consume meat, eggs or dairy products. Almost 75 percent of those questioned said they look for animal welfare information on labels more so than they did five years ago, while 67 percent were likely to buy meat, eggs and dairy products bearing a welfare certification label with

meaningful standards—even if it meant paying more. Yet 65 percent still believe the term "free-range" means animals spend most of the time on pasture, while nearly half thought an independent inspector already verifies the health and welfare of animals on most farms.

"Americans are increasingly concerned about the welfare of farm animals and want to make a difference when shopping for food, but are understandably confused by a number of misleading or meaningless labels," says Daisy Freund from the ASPCA. "Consumers are willing to pay for more humane options, but need help understanding which labels provide meaningful welfare improvements for farm animals."

## NATIONAL CHEESE AWARD WINNERS

Five Certified AWA farms won a total of 17 awards at the 33rd annual American Cheese Society Competition in Des Moines, IA, in late July.

Four Certified AWA cheeses earned first place recognition out of almost 1,850 entries—including 'Fresh Garlic Peppercorn' Certified AWA sheep milk cheese from Green Dirt Farm, MO; 'Baserri' Certified AWA sheep milk cheese from Barinaga Ranch, CA; and 'Claire's Mandell Hill' and 'Hanna's Awashed' Certified AWA goat milk cheeses from Ruggles Hill Creamery, MA.

Green Dirt Farm took home a total of nine awards, including four second place awards and four third place awards. Our congratulations to everyone.



Marcia Barinaga of Barinaga Ranch, CA



### USDA NON-GMO GUIDELINES

USDA recently released guidelines on labeling products from animals that do not consume GMO (or Genetically Engineered) feed, requiring that any such claim be backed by a third party certification.

"We have been assured by USDA staff that our Certified Non-GE by AGW label now covers both Non-GE and Non-GMO claims," says AGW's Labeling Coordinator Emily Moose. "We welcome this announcement and have designed a new Certified Non-GMO label for use by certified farms."

DAVID COLLIER

## PERDUE HATCHES A PLAN

Perdue's plans to improve chicken welfare will bring little real benefit, warns AGW.

Perdue, one of the largest poultry producers in the U.S., announced a four-part strategy to address consumer concern about chicken welfare. Working with advocacy groups, such as Compassion in World Farming, Mercy For Animals and the Humane Society of the United States, Perdue's 2016 and Beyond: Next Generation of Perdue Commitments to Animal Care includes plans to retrofit 200 chicken houses with windows by the end of 2016 "to compare bird health and activity to enclosed housing," and improve relationships with its farmers by "creating an open dialogue about best practices." Perdue will also investigate ways to expand Controlled Atmosphere Stunning, currently in operation at one plant.

Former Perdue farmer Carole Morison now raises Certified AWA laying hens at Bird's Eye View Farm, MD: "Some animal welfare organizations have lauded Perdue for its announcement," she says. "While I'd love to think the day for real change in industrial chicken production has finally come, I'll believe it when I see it. The reality is high-welfare food has become a market to capture."

AGW's Andrew Gunther is equally skeptical. "Our biggest challenge with announcements like this, and the so-called welfare improvements they promote, is that it gives consumers a false sense of security. There's actually little of substance here: Perdue's birds will still be raised indoors in confinement, unable to express key natural behaviors. The birds won't realize their lives are any better."

MINSANTHOSKUNAR



### PARTNERS IN PA

Caputo Brothers Creamery, PA, is looking to partner with a local dairy farm to source Certified AWA milk for their new cheese plant in Spring Grove, PA.

"As the demand for our artisan Italian cheeses continues to grow, we want to find a source farm who can grow with us, and who is interested in becoming Certified AWA," says David Rosentrater, Caputo Brothers' Director of Herd to Curd Operations.

For more information, call 717-683-0009.

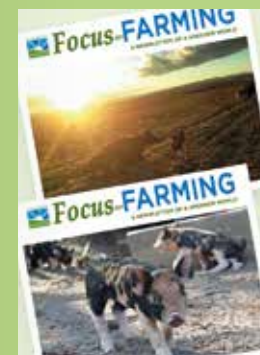
## USDA WEAK ON ORGANIC WELFARE

Proposals to incorporate animal welfare into the National Organic Program (NOP) standards do not go far enough, warns an organic industry watchdog.

The USDA's Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices would introduce new requirements on living conditions of organic animals, including transportation, slaughter and minimum indoor and outdoor space provision. They are intended to address what many see as a long-standing hole in the U.S. organic standards, often exploited by corporate interests. However, AGW believes the

proposed rules will do little to address poor welfare found on many industrial-scale organic operations.

"While some welfare groups wrongly welcomed the NOP's welfare proposals as a 'clear breakthrough,' we believe they don't go nearly far enough," says Mark Kastel of the Cornucopia Institute. "If these rules are introduced, we're unlikely to see any further improvements in the welfare of billions of certified organic animals for years to come. If we're serious about improving welfare on organic farms, shouldn't we aim for meaningful change now?"



## FOCUS ON FARMING E-NEWSLETTER

AGW has launched a dedicated monthly email newsletter for farmers and ranchers, following feedback from a communications survey.

"The survey revealed that more production-centric information was wanted," explains AGW's Emily Moose. "So we developed *Focus on Farming*, with news, technical advice and resources for farmers, ranchers and allied professionals."

AGW's existing monthly supporter email, *Tales from the Field*, was also improved following the survey results. With a reach of over 30,000 readers, this publication is designed to educate, inform and share news about certified farms and products with the general public.

Sign up for both at [animalwelfareapproved.org/sign-up-for-our-mailing-list](http://animalwelfareapproved.org/sign-up-for-our-mailing-list)





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\*For food producers and businesses in the AGW certification family. Conditions apply.

for full details visit  
[animalwelfareapproved.org/farmers/labeling](http://animalwelfareapproved.org/farmers/labeling)  
or call 800-373-8806

## Opinion

# THE RESURGENCE OF FAMILY FARMS?

America will “become great again” one family farm at a time, says farmer John Whiteside

Can family farms feed the world using sustainable agriculture? Yes, but only if we pursue this on a local basis through diversified family farms—and keep national and international government agencies as far away as possible.

The resurgence of the family farm is critical, not only for feeding the world, but also nurturing the environmental stewardship, economic prudence and moral compass required for a free and just society. If we attempt to solve world hunger on a global basis and in isolation from other modern societal ills—consumerism, globalism, moral relativism and nihilism—we inevitably turn to centralized national and international government agencies. Yet these are not only unqualified to address the sources of societal ills (as amply demonstrated in the recent U.S. political conventions), but are the main cause and accelerant (as evidenced by big business/big government partnership pushing GE and industrial/chemical “farming.”)

The family farm has been the foundation of sustainable society for millennia, based on three key dimensions: ecological balance, economic stability and social responsibility. By nurturing the soil and recycling organic “wastes,” the family farm operated with minimal external inputs. While not wealthy, the farmer lived a fulfilling life, amassing the only true measures of lasting wealth: land and family. The family farm was the original classroom where “home economics,” “work ethic,” “saving against future challenging times,” and “familial and societal responsibility” were taught, lending stability to the community of which it was a part. The population grew, but only to the extent that it could be supported by local natural resources. The family farmer also brought his ethic for stewardship of the land and all God’s creatures to the realm of social responsibility.

The arrival of the industrial revolution began to undermine the family farm. Capital replaced labor, as industrialists sought to separate labor from the land, concentrating it in cities to enable the magic of economies of scale. Business worked hand-in-glove with government to accelerate this shift, a trend that escalated after WWII with cheap energy, the conversion of war-time chemical

plants to producing fertilizers and pesticides, and the elimination of price parity legislation that was keeping family farms from being bankrupted by an industrial/consumer economy.

USDA Secretary Earl Butz launched the final assault on the family farm, and thus all rural communities. He convinced President Nixon to use U.S. grain exports as a strategic weapon against the USSR and other oil producing nations, and admonished farmers to “get big or get out,” replacing the “underproductive” diversified family farm with “capital and chemical intensive” corporate farms dedicated to a grain monoculture to feed industrial confined animal feeding operations.

Butz succeeded: Today, fewer than 2 percent of U.S. citizens live on farms, while a handful of global corporations control the supply of most agricultural commodities. It is small wonder that the Constitutional Republic formed by family farmers has devolved into Crony Capitalism controlled by the political and business elite.

Proponents of industrial agriculture argue that a collection of local communities based on sustainable family farms could not support the current global population, and average per capita consumption will be lower than that which the average U.S. citizen has attained (and to which all humans aspire). Proponents of sustainable family farms and the locally governed communities they support would agree, but reach a far different conclusion. Instead of propping up an unsustainable human population at unsustainable levels of consumption, we should return to sustainable family farms.

Local communities have the right to feed and protect themselves from globalization. This is the ultimate issue of sovereignty. The recent British vote to leave the EU and the current “outsider” popularity on both the left and right in U.S. politics provide hope that the changing political climate may finally favor the resurgence of the local family farm as society’s key economic unit in a sustainable solution to world hunger.

*John Whiteside owns and operates 1,600-acre Wolf Creek Farm in Madison, VA, raising Certified Grassfed by AGW beef cattle. Visit [www.wolfcreekfarm.com](http://www.wolfcreekfarm.com)*



# WALK THIS WAY

Agricultural apprenticeships offer the perfect solution for people seeking a career in ranching or farming. Virginie Pointeau considers what's involved for the host farm or ranch



VIRGINIE POINTEAU

For aspiring ranchers and farmers, one of the most daunting barriers to creating a successful, resilient agricultural enterprise is lack of on-the-ground, hands-on experience. This is especially true now, when the up-and-coming generation is increasingly made up of individuals who have grown up in cities, with no family connection to agriculture and limited direct experience.

Agricultural apprenticeships offer the perfect solution for young people seeking agrarian careers. And, given concerning stats about the aging U.S. agricultural workforce, engaging established farmers and ranchers as employers, teachers and mentors for the next generation is more important than ever.

## An aging population

According to the USDA's 2012 *Census of Agriculture*, the average age of ranchers and farmers in the U.S. is approaching 60. Throughout the country, only 6 percent of family operations are owned by people 35 years old or younger, while more than 30 percent are owned by people 65 and older. Some 3,000 acres of productive agricultural land is lost to development every day.

These trends not only serve as a powerful call to action, but also present a huge opportunity. Established ranchers and farmers who have given their lives to ensuring healthy soils, healthy food and healthy communities embody knowledge that is most effectively passed on through mentorship, direct example and experiential learning on the land. An entire generation of practitioners is beginning to retire. The knowledge they hold is a veritable goldmine—and not the type that can be acquired in a classroom. What better time to spread the notion of apprenticeship?

## The idea taking root

In Europe, the idea and practice of apprenticeship goes back generations and offers easy entry into a number of careers. In his or her chosen field, an apprentice is immersed in multifaceted, comprehensive training in an authentic, professional setting, often supplemented with classroom instruction. Employers pay for both the labor and education, and consider these positions an investment in the long-term success of their own enterprises and society at large. They see apprenticeships as an effective system to pass on knowledge from one generation to the next and ensure a thriving community of skilled professionals.

In Europe, apprenticeships typically last several years, allowing them the time to reach a level of mastery necessary to launch a successful career.

Although our modern lack of familiarity with this model persists, the idea is slowly beginning to take root in the U.S. Just this year, the Obama administration included \$90 million in the Fiscal Year 2016 spending bill to increase apprenticeship opportunities.

## Established models

For land-based careers such as agriculture, apprenticeships are a natural fit—and are slowly increasing in number, administered mostly through nonprofit organizations or by private ranches or farms. While U.S. agricultural apprenticeships do not require the many years of commitment typical of the European model, those that refer to themselves as apprenticeships do tend to stand apart from more common internships, which imply only limited exposure to a trade or profession for a relatively short length of time, sometimes as little as two months.

A number of well-established apprenticeship programs now operate in the U.S., generally managed through nonprofit organizations that partner with ranchers and farmers who are willing to host and mentor apprentices (see next page). Perhaps less known but increasingly common are single apprenticeship positions located on individual, private ranches and farms. Together, this growing movement is demonstrating that apprenticeships are among the most effective educational methodologies to successfully—and quickly—train the next generation of ranchers and farmers.

## Why mentor?

Although mentoring can be extremely rewarding, it is not an easy task. Apprentices live on site and very quickly become immersed in the daily tasks and rhythms of the host operation. They work alongside their mentors on short and long days alike, in hot sunny weather and freezing storms. Mentors and apprentices experience the full spectrum of each other's expressions and moods, from eager and cheerful to exhausted and irritable. Through it all, mentors are expected to take on many roles.

As employers, they must be knowledgeable about their state's labor and employment regulations, including payroll and workers' compensation requirements. As hosts, they must provide adequate and safe housing. As teachers, they must take the apprentice's educational goals into account and be willing to experiment with different ways of presenting a vast diversity of topics, ranging from irrigation, plumbing, electrical and tractor mechanics to animal health and husbandry, plant identification, compost management—and the list goes on.

*"Once upon a time, apprenticeship was the primary form of education available to a person, whatever the field—medicine, music, cobbler or scholar. Not necessarily a beginner, but not yet a master, an apprentice agreed to work for a specific length of time for a master craftsman in a craft or trade, in return for instruction. An agrarian apprenticeship is a form of this age-old process by which a learner becomes a practitioner."*

Julie Sullivan, CO,  
Rancher and New  
Agrarian Program  
mentor

*Opposite: 2012  
apprentice Josh Lang  
at Certified AWA  
James Ranch Artisan  
Cheese, Durango, CO*



Mentors must also be willing to accept their apprentices as whole humans, complete with talents and faults, dreams and demons, laughter and tears. And, as managers, they must do all this while ensuring their business's bottom line. No wonder that on paper it appears to be an entirely unreasonable endeavor.

And yet mentoring an apprentice can be hugely rewarding. Apprentices bring youthful energy and physical stamina for those long days working in any weather. These days, they often contribute a level of technological savvy that can prove useful for building or updating websites or developing new marketing strategies through social media. They also bring a refreshing thirst for knowledge, and their seemingly incessant questions, suggestions and ideas just might lead to a few useful innovations or increased efficiencies.

Finally, mentoring the next generation of agrarians is also critically important to the future of farming and ranching. By growing a strongly collaborative network of small, regional apprenticeship programs and by learning from one another, we are catalyzing a national network of people and organizations committed to growing the next generation of ranchers and farmers.

**You are not alone**

Apprenticeships are not for everyone. But for those who are interested in mentoring, the great news is there's no need to reinvent the wheel.



Shalini Karra, Samantha Bradford and Drew Cole help rancher George Whitten troubleshoot a dysfunctional well at San Juan Ranch, CO

Depending on location, area of agricultural focus and other criteria, a ranch or farm may qualify to become a host operation for an existing apprenticeship program. Such partnerships can bring a number of perks for the mentor, ranging from free outreach and marketing and an established application process, to well-developed educational materials—and possibly even some funding.

Alternatively, an aspiring mentor may choose to design his or her own apprenticeship program. In this case, taking the time to contact an established program will provide invaluable insight and guidance. People engaged in the work are often eager to share their experience and will welcome a call or email.

Lastly, to all the ranchers and farmers out there whose lifelong work has kept our soils healthy and our bellies full: thank you for investing your time and hard-earned knowledge into the next generation. Your time and dedicated mentorship is the best gift you can offer to someone aspiring to do what you've done. No one is more qualified for this job than you.

*Virginie Pointeau is New Agrarian Program Director at the Quivira Coalition, a nonprofit dedicated to building resilience on western working landscapes. She also serves on the boards of the National Young Farmers Coalition and the Southwest Grassfed Livestock Alliance. She lives in Santa Fe, NM*



2012, San Juan Ranch, Saguache, CO. Apprentices (left to right) Shalini Karra, Claire Persichetti, Justine Sanfilippo and Samantha Bradford

**FURTHER READING**

*The Quivira Coalition has surveyed many apprenticeships and programs from coast to coast—the models, educational curriculums and financial structures; successes and challenges; and the motivation driving the mentors and program directors.*

*The book, Agrarian Apprenticeship: Growing the Next Generation of Ranchers and Farmers, is the culmination of that work and also includes a step-by-step guide for creating an apprenticeship.*

Available from [quiviracoalition.org](http://quiviracoalition.org)

**Case study**

Looking to learn on the farm? Yes, cheese



Dan James of Certified AWA James Ranch Artisan Cheese with his 2016 apprentice, Kirstin Sigurdson

James Ranch Artisan Cheese manages a small herd of Jersey cows for the production of Certified AWA milk and small-batch cheeses in the beautiful Animas Valley near Durango, CO. Operated by Dan and Becca James, it is one of several family-run enterprises on the larger James Ranch. The ranch is Certified AWA and the cows are milked seasonally and only once a day.

As beginning farmers, Dan and Becca relied on the patience and generosity of other farmers to answer their many questions and provide valuable advice. The gratitude they felt toward these older and wiser mentors inspired them to go full circle a few years later: In 2010, they partnered with the Quivira Coalition's New Agrarian Program (NAP) to create an eight-month, seasonal apprenticeship.

Today, the James Ranch apprenticeship incorporates all aspects of dairy operation and cheese production, including low-stress animal handling, milking, cheese making and marketing, financial planning and land stewardship. Apprentices work alongside Dan on a daily basis

and, as their skill level and confidence increase, they are entrusted with additional responsibilities.

As part of NAP, Dan and Becca's apprentices also participate in several off-ranch program activities, including a two-day orientation in the spring with fellow NAP apprentices, and opportunities to visit each other's mentor farm or ranch during the season. In the fall, apprentices attend the annual Quivira Conference, including three days of presentations and networking opportunities to help them identify their next steps.

While NAP provides a basic structure for the apprenticeship, the lion's share of the work falls on Dan and Becca's shoulders. As mentors, they are not only responsible for teaching the plethora of technical skills necessary to maintain their enterprise; they are bringing a whole human into their business, their daily lives, their family—every single day. Mentorship doesn't end when the apprentice graduates: Dan and Becca continue to provide advice and reassurance to their apprentices for years after they have left James Ranch.

**APPRENTICESHIP ADVICE**

Whether you are looking for an opportunity to apprentice or seeking advice for the development of an apprenticeship within your own enterprise or organization, this list is a great place to start:

**Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship**

[www.dga-national.org](http://www.dga-national.org) | Medford, WI

**Grange Farm School**

[www.grangefarmschool.org](http://www.grangefarmschool.org) | Willits, CA

**Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association**

[www.mofga.org](http://www.mofga.org) | Unity, ME

**North American Biodynamics Apprenticeship Program**

[www.biodynamic.com/nabdap](http://www.biodynamic.com/nabdap) | Milwaukee, WI

**Quivira Coalition: New Agrarian Program**

[www.quiviracoalition.org](http://www.quiviracoalition.org) | Santa Fe, NM

**Rogue Farm Corps**

[www.roguefarmcorps.org](http://www.roguefarmcorps.org) | Ashland, OR

**Stone Barns Growing Farmers Initiative**

[www.stonebarnscenter.org](http://www.stonebarnscenter.org) | Tarrytown, NY

**Vilicus Training Institute**

[www.vilicusfarms.com](http://www.vilicusfarms.com) | Havre, MT



# FOOD SAFETY FROM FARM TO MARKET

Caitlin Aguilar offers best practice advice on food safety at your farmers' market stall

As the prevalence of antibiotic resistant bacteria escalates and food recalls become a daily occurrence, the need to establish sanitary handling practices from the farm to market has become a necessity. Yet the growing public anxiety surrounding the dreaded question of “What’s for dinner?” could present a real opportunity for family farmers to change the face of the food industry by constructing trustworthy local brands for the everyday consumer.

## A food safety culture

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that one in six Americans get sick from eating contaminated food every year. That’s almost 17 percent of the American population. Now, think back to your most recent bout with a stomach bug: chances are whatever caused it was most likely not on your grocery list for quite some time—if ever again. For those who sell directly to the public, every food poisoning illness not only represents potential damage to your margins, but loss of trust with your brand—and local food producers as a whole.

Developing sound food safety practices for your farm can seem daunting, especially if you are in the early stages of starting your on-farm food business. But a solid program doesn’t have to be complicated. In fact, food safety is simply a concoction of common sense and science you can tailor to meet the needs of your individual enterprise.

## Handling and packaging

If you are new to selling at farmers’ markets, be aware that regulations vary by state, so contact your local inspection agency to ensure you meet all necessary safe food handling requirements well before the start of your season. But whether you are new to selling directly to the public or a seasoned veteran, sanitary handling should be



Ensure product labeling is correct and complies with all regulatory requirements

a top priority. All food handling should begin with hand washing. Use hot soapy water and scrub for a minimum of 20 seconds. Cover any cuts or sores with appropriate dressings and make sure to wear gloves. Processing tools, including cutting boards, knives and scabbards, should be cleaned and sanitized before each use. One billion bacteria can fit on the size of a pinhead, so just because a surface looks clean doesn’t necessarily mean it is. Cross contamination can happen at any point before packaging, so if you or a team member has a communicable illness, do not handle product.

When it comes to food packaging, choose the best option to fit your market. Vacuum packaging—an increasingly popular and sanitary choice—is wonderfully versatile from fridge to freezer. However, poor seals and leaking packages commonly occur, so have a plan to handle leakers (faulty vacuum seals or poorly crimped clips on ground chubs) to ensure you don’t contaminate the rest of your product—or your customer’s shopping. Consider supplying disposable plastic bags to prevent cross contamination between your products and other customer purchases.

The final packaging step is labeling. In the U.S., the number one reason for product recall is allergen mislabeling. Risks can be minimized with accurate ingredient declaration and proper label approval. Before you take your product to market, ensure labeling is correct and complies with all regulation. Although labeling regulations can be somewhat confusing, there are eight mandatory requirements for your finished product label:

1. Product name
2. Inspection legend and establishment number—also known as the plant bug
3. Handling statement
4. Net weight
5. Ingredient declaration
6. Address line
7. Nutrition panel
8. Safe handling instructions



Ice chests are a simple and effective method for transporting food to the farmers’ market. Ensure they are thoroughly cleaned and sanitized before every use

Verifying and obtaining state or federal approval for your labels should become an integral step in your food safety program. AWA offers labeling support—including design and assistance with approval—to certified farmers and ranchers at no charge (see page 18-19).

## Off to market

As you transfer your product to cold storage, keep a close eye on temperature. Food poisoning bacteria generally grow best in the so-called danger zone of 40°F to 140°F. Best practices and federal regulation require meat to be stored at 40°F or below. Some markets may prohibit the sale of fresh meat. In this case, frozen meat should be stored at 0°F. As a rule, you should verify and document the temperature of your fridge or freezer—at minimum—once a day. Documentation may be as simple as writing temperatures on a calendar or clipboard outside of your fridge or freezer. Alarms are now available that will call or text your cell phone if there is a power outage or if temperatures increase above a set level. If you suspect your product has been in the “danger zone” for longer than two hours, mitigate any risk and condemn the lot. No farmer wants to see products thrown in the garbage, but when in doubt, throw it out. Consumer health and brand integrity cannot be compromised.

If you do not have access to a refrigerated vehicle for transport, ice chests are a simple and effective transport method. Ice chests should be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized before every use to prevent bacterial harborage or residues. Reusable ice packs and dry ice are suitable for keeping temperatures controlled without wreaking havoc on your product labels. Note that market displays should never include temperature sensitive product: Photos of your products, empty egg cartons and dummy packs/displays of your products are safe and simple marketing practices.



Most farmers’ markets require vendors to have basic handwashing stations

Always keep raw and ready-to-eat (RTE) cutting boards, utensils and serving pieces separate, and sanitize them before every market. If you intend to offer food samples, use a meat thermometer to ensure cooked samples reach correct temperatures and offer toothpicks or small disposable forks to avoid handling samples directly and potential cross-contamination from consumers.

Most farmers’ markets require food vendors to establish handwashing stations at their individual stall. Generally speaking, a sufficient hand washing station includes a source of free flowing water, a catch basin or bucket, hand soap, paper towels and a trash receptacle.

Finally, encourage your customers to refrigerate or freeze their purchases within two hours of purchase verbally and through signage/labeling. Many consumers rely on reusable bags and soft coolers to hold their products while shopping. Although reusable bags are a great eco-friendly alternative to disposables, remind your customers to wash their bags after every use as cross contamination can be a major food safety threat. Where practical, offering to hold purchases in a dedicated cooler for later collection can be extremely popular with customers.

Your customers can be your biggest advocates—or your loudest public critics. Building consumer trust by providing safe and wholesome product is essential to establishing your customer base and growing your business. As with high-welfare farming, when planning your food safety program, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

*Caitlin Aguilar is AGW’s Director of Quality. She spent the past decade in farming, food processing and regulatory compliance, working the last five years in quality control and regulatory compliance for a California-based poultry producer*

## FURTHER INFORMATION

The Farmers Market Coalition provides extensive tutorials and handling guidelines: [farmersmarketcoalition.org](http://farmersmarketcoalition.org); select news and food safety

Contact your nearest State University Extension Programs for information on local regulations and market requirements

Find expert advice on food safety practices, news and alerts at [foodsafety.gov](http://foodsafety.gov)



# FOOD RECALL PLANS

All food businesses should be ready in the event of a food recall

*Listeria monocytogenes*, salmonella, foreign material, undeclared allergens, mislabeled ingredients ... The common thread? All have been linked to massive food recalls. And when it comes to federal food safety and recall regulation, the national standards for small farms and corporations are almost identical. If you are an independent food business, you need to develop a recall action plan should disaster strike.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention and USDA are working together to identify bacterial strains in both the food processing plant and in the marketplace. This means the authorities can quickly match the DNA of food poisoning bacteria collected from sick consumers and link them directly back to the producer, catalyzing a recall. Although certain strains of pathogenic bacteria are not as prevalent in pasture-based systems, your animals may still harbor pathogens. Given this potential, it is vital to maintain product liability insurance. Regardless of the size of your farm, all it takes is one linked consumer illness or death to cause a recall and lead your family into bankruptcy.

Though a recall may seem unlikely, being prepared for the unexpected is essential. And by adding a recall plan to your food safety program and further protecting your assets with liability insurance, not only will you be creating peace of mind as you build your business, you will be better equipped to successfully weather the storm.

Your written recall procedures should include the following steps:

1. Build a recall team.
2. Establish your parameters for identifying a recall: Has contaminated or misbranded product entered the marketplace?

3. Define the scope of the recall: How much product is affected, what pack dates are affected, what product codes are affected.

4. Gather your processing records for inspection review: Records should be held, at absolute minimum, for the length of the product shelf life. Processing records are crucial and may be the difference between recalling one production run or six months of product.

5. Develop a recall communication list: This should include contact information of inspectors, distributors, suppliers and customers.

6. Determine how you will notify the public: Include specific details of the reason for the recall, affected product information and risk, product return and handling protocol, request for a written response to your notification and your contact information.

7. Investigate the efficacy of your recall and decide if you have captured all affected product.

8. Establish a plan for handling returned products: Decide whether you need to condemn the product and what records you will maintain of the disposal.

9. Test your recall system: Perform mock recalls and traceability exercises to identify weaknesses.

10. Develop a plan for notifying your inspection agency that your product has been reconciled: Recall records should include the total pounds of product recovered from commerce, as well as the final disposition of your product. Federal law requires you to notify the Food Safety Inspection Service or Food and Drug Administration within 24 hours of determining that contaminated product has entered the marketplace.

For more information, see USDA's How to Develop a Meat and Poultry Product Recall Plan and FDA's Regulatory Procedures Manual (both available online)

ALEXANDER BATHS



# EXTERNAL PARASITES IN CATTLE



Severe skin lesions in cow associated with psoroptic mange



Microscopic image of the adult sarcoptic mange mite



Close-up infestation of sucking lice on cattle



Cattle lice cause irritation and rubbing, resulting in hair loss and poor coat quality

Lice and mange in cattle can become a serious welfare concern if left untreated, says Anna Heaton

**The problem**  
One of the risk factors for mange and lice is keeping animals in close concentration. Although animals managed according to AWA standards will have plenty of space (whether they are outside on pasture or in housing), the right nutrition for their age and stage of growth (and therefore have strong immune systems), and be less likely to be affected by these parasites, even the best managed farms can sometimes develop problems with lice and mange.

Different types of lice and mange can affect cattle in the U.S. Sucking lice pierce the skin and suck the blood of the animal; biting lice feed on skin debris, blood and scabs. Biting lice appear to produce a more severe irritation or reaction than sucking lice.

Mange mites could be psoroptic, sarcoptic or chorioptic, with the latter being the most common in the U.S. Psoroptic mange is mostly reported in the central and western states, with the largest numbers of outbreaks reported from Texas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado and Nebraska. Psoroptic and chorioptic mange mites live on the surface of the host animal's skin and feed on lymph as well as dead cells and other debris. Sarcoptic mange mites burrow deeply into the skin, laying eggs inside the burrows. The eggs hatch into the larval stage. The larval mites then leave the burrows, move up to the skin surface, and begin forming new burrows in healthy skin tissue. The reaction to psoroptic mange mites is often the most severe and, in severe cases, lesions may cover the entire body, leading to secondary bacterial infections.

**Spread**  
Lice and mange are very contagious and generally spread by direct contact between cattle, and therefore tend to become more of a problem when cattle are in close contact—for example, when they are housed for the winter. These parasites tend to be less of a problem in the summer when cattle

have thinner coats, are outside exposed to sun and rain, and self-grooming increases.

**Identification**  
Adult lice and eggs are visible to the naked eye and, if present in large numbers, can be seen by parting the hair, particularly along the back of the animal. Eggs are whitish in colour and glued to hair shafts. Adult biting lice are reddish brown, about 0.08 inches long with a dark brown head. For differentiation purposes, sucking lice have smaller, narrow heads, designed for piercing the skin. The biting louse is mostly found on the neck, shoulders, back and rump.

Mange mites are not visible to the naked eye. Although the mites can sometimes be detected with a magnifying glass, it is almost impossible to identify the type of mange causing the problem without a microscope. Mange lesions usually first appear around the tail, anus, thighs, udder, legs and feet. If you suspect mange mites, get your vet to take a skin scraping from affected animals.

**Control and prevention**  
As noted above, animals that are kept in good conditions with good nutrition are less likely to suffer from lice and mange. It therefore follows that when animals are under stress they are more likely to be susceptible. In addition, self-grooming helps to remove lice eggs before they hatch. Animals that are ill will not groom themselves as much as normal and louse numbers will quickly start to build. Other stresses such as nutritional stress can also cause greater susceptibility to both lice and mange.

Bought-in cattle represent a key source of lice or mange and can quickly spread the parasites through the rest of your herd. Basic biosecurity for all incoming animals can therefore help prevent outbreaks of lice and mange on your farm. Quarantine and observe all bought in animals for any signs of scratching or areas of raw skin. If these

are observed, and lice or mange is subsequently identified, the animals must be treated before being integrated with the main herd.

If you have had a group of cattle in a barn, it should be left empty for at least 10 days before restocking. Mange, lice and their eggs can survive when they are off cattle—but not for very long.

**Treatment**  
For low levels of lice infestation, some farmers report successful treatment using plant oils (such as canola, soya or neem oil) spread as a thin even coat over the problem area. Oil clogs up the pores through which lice “breathe.”

In more severe outbreaks, a number of proprietary chemical products can be used to treat lice and mange. However, it is important to first identify what type of parasite your cattle are suffering from. Synthetic pyrethroids are commonly prescribed for lice and mange, although there have been reports of psoroptic mange failing to respond to this treatment. Injectable ivermectin treatments, such as doramectin and ivermectin, can also be used for lice and mange. Be aware that organophosphates, such as malathion or coumaphos, are sometimes recommended for mange treatment, but are prohibited under AWA standards (unless no other treatment is available). Finally, remember to take heed of the appropriate withdrawal periods for whichever product you use.

**Summary**  
If your cattle are itching and scratching you should investigate to see if mange or lice are the underlying cause. Be aware that both lice and mange are highly contagious and will spread easily from animal to animal, and even those that don't currently show signs of hair loss may be infected. If you find mange mites or lice on one animal, it is likely that the whole group will need treatment.

Anna Heaton is AWA's Lead Technical Advisor.

### DETERMINING THE PRESENCE OF LICE

Inspect the key sites and count the lice seen. Part hair with comb or rear of pocket knife and examine skin along length of the part. Make 4-5 partings, 3-4 inches long, at each examination site.

1. Muzzle
2. Eye
3. Cheek
4. Dewlap (or brisket)
5. Withers
6. Topline
7. Tailhead

The combined number of lice at all sites gives an indication of severity of the infestation:

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Under 10 | Minimal (treatment probably unnecessary) |
| 10 to 50 | Moderate (consider treatment)            |
| Over 50  | Heavy (treatment probably necessary)     |

For more information on AWA standards and guidance on products suitable for use, visit [animalwelfareapproved.org/standards/parasite-treatment](http://animalwelfareapproved.org/standards/parasite-treatment)



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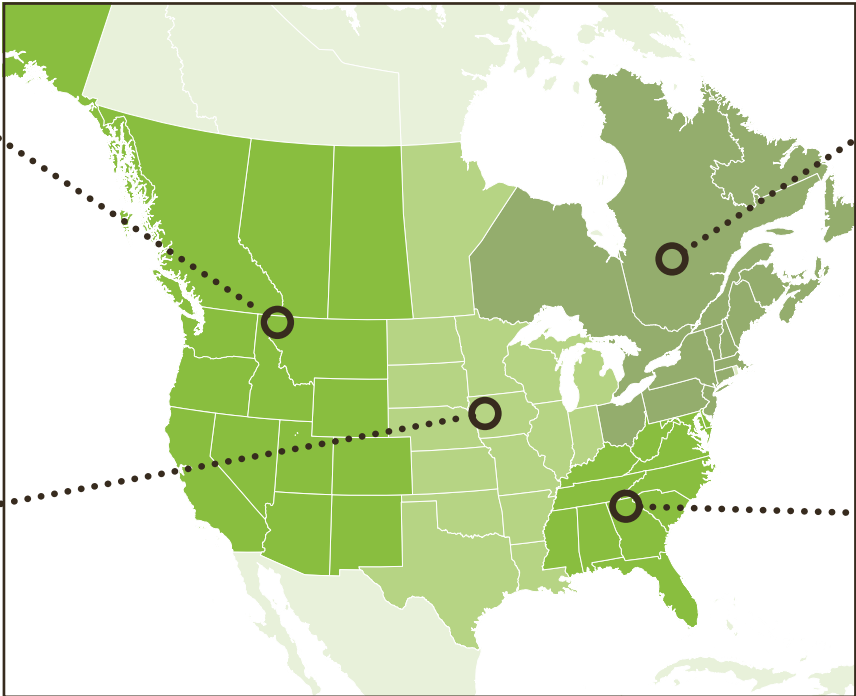
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510-250-0916  
Amanda@animalwelfareapproved.org



CENTRAL REGION  
**Alexandra Frantz**  
773-304-4155  
Alexandra@animalwelfareapproved.org

## Your regional point of contact

From Alaska to Wyoming, Alberta to Saskatchewan, our outreach team offers a one-stop shop for farmers, ranchers and food businesses!



NORTHEAST REGION  
**Katie Amos**  
717-412-1701  
Katie@animalwelfareapproved.org



SOUTHEAST REGION  
**Callie Casteel**  
931-548-0664  
Callie@animalwelfareapproved.org

## LOOKING FOR PROFESSIONAL PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS?

Whether you sell products at grocery stores, restaurants, farmers' markets, online or directly from the farm or ranch, our free AWA branded promotional materials will help set you apart. Choose from materials like brochures, stickers, vendor window clings, vinyl banners and even metal farm signs—all free to certified farms! Order at [animalwelfareapproved.org/farmers/materials](http://animalwelfareapproved.org/farmers/materials) or call us at 800-373-8806.

We also offer a free label design service. See [AnimalWelfareApproved.org/farmers/labeling](http://AnimalWelfareApproved.org/farmers/labeling)



## Services

### Need advice?

If you have a question about our farm standards or certification procedures, just get in touch! We also offer a range of *Technical Advice Factsheets*, packed with practical information on numerous topics—from record keeping and biosecurity to best practice castration or avoiding tail docking.

### Marketing materials

We offer a variety of free marketing materials to farmers, ranchers and food businesses—including quality metal signs, food labels, vinyl banners (good for farmers' market stalls), point-of-sale brochures, post-it notes—and more!

### Is your farm profile up to date?

To help raise awareness about your business, we upload a short profile about every farm and ranch on our website. If you are new to the program the outreach team will be in touch. But if you ever feel your profile needs updating, just contact your regional coordinator.

### Got some news? Share it!

We write a dedicated press release for every farm or ranch that joins our programs. But if you're launching a new product or hosting a farm event, we'll do our best to spread the word through our social media and communications networks.

### Online directory

Our searchable online directory is the single most popular area on our website, and helps thousands of visitors find suppliers of Certified AWA, Certified Grassfed by AGW and Certified Non-GMO/Non-GE by AGW products every year. Make sure your listing is up to date and contact your regional coordinator, if necessary.

### Sign up for monthly e-news

Our monthly *Focus on Farming* email keeps you up to date with relevant news and information, as well as our program of activities and events.

For further information about any of our services—or if you have any questions—contact your regional outreach coordinator (see map, left).

## Programs

### Animal Welfare Approved

Acknowledged by Consumer Reports as the *only* “highly meaningful” food label for farm animal welfare, outdoor access and sustainability, Animal Welfare Approved (AWA) is an independent, non-profit farm certification program—and one of the top 5 fastest growing certifications and label claims in North America.

AWA is the only farm certification that guarantees animals are raised outdoors on pasture or range for their entire lives on an independent family farm using sustainable agriculture methods, and is one of only two certifiers in the U.S. to require audited, high-welfare transport and slaughter practices.

### Certified Grassfed by AGW

The *only* grassfed certification and logo in the U.S. and Canada that guarantees meat and milk products come from animals fed a 100 percent grass and forage diet, raised outdoors on pasture or range, and managed according to the highest welfare and environmental standards on an independent family farm.

Certified Grassfed by AGW is an optional, additional accreditation for farmers and ranchers who are meeting Certified AWA standards of production, and provides grassfed farm businesses with the tools they need to clearly differentiate themselves in the marketplace.

### Certified Non-GMO/Non-GE by AGW

Certified Non-GMO/Non-GE by AGW is the only food label in North America that helps consumers identify GMO (or genetically engineered) products and support high-welfare, environmentally sustainable food animal production.

Available to farmers, ranchers and food producers, the Certified Non-GMO/Non-GE by AGW label guarantees food products are not only produced without GE feed, supplements or ingredients, but is the *only* non-GE label to offer further assurances about animal welfare and environmental sustainability (the label is an optional addition to AWA certification).







# BASIC BIOSECURITY

Every farm and ranch should follow these routine measures

Farm biosecurity is a set of management practices used to minimize the risk of introducing—and preventing the spread—of new pathogens, such as bacteria, viruses or parasites, to your farm or ranch. Many livestock diseases can cause significant welfare problems, as well as economic loss. Basic biosecurity can help minimize such risks and should form a key part of your Farm Health Plan (see *Sustainable Farming*, volume 1, issue 1).

The movement of infected livestock is the most obvious and likely means by which diseases spread between animals—and farms. Many infections or parasites are not immediately apparent in the early stages of infection. Even the healthiest looking new stock can harbor health problems that could spread throughout your herd or flock without some basic precautions. Ensuring animals are purchased from farms with known disease status and implementing effective quarantine procedures are central biosecurity procedures for every farm or ranch. However, even farms with closed herds or flocks are not immune. Any farm that has visitors—whether neighboring farmers, contractors, feed trucks or members of the public—is at risk of importing new diseases.

Ideally, start by talking to your vet or extension office about developing a good biosecurity plan, and discuss any concerns you have about introducing specific diseases to your farm or ranch. They are likely to not only offer ‘best practice’ advice, but also know about the key disease

## ESSENTIAL STEPS

Keep pathogens off your farm or ranch by following these basic biosecurity steps:

1. Quarantine and monitor purchased stock for four weeks
2. Consider blood tests for high value replacement animals, such as breeding bulls
3. Vaccinate against known risks
4. Communicate with neighbors about emerging threats or problems
5. Correct storage of food and water
6. Boot dipping for all visitors
7. Handwashing and sanitation
8. Disinfect all visiting equipment, trailers and machinery

risks in your area and for your animal species. Consulting online resources, such as AGW’s Farm Health Online website (below), is also advised.

Pathogens generally spread through direct or indirect transmission. Direct transmission includes contact from animal to animal, or person to animal (or vice versa); droplet (sneezing or coughing); and bodily fluid, including across the placenta or through lactation. Indirect transmission can occur from, for example, pathogens brought in on manure-contaminated machinery, equipment and tools—or even people’s boots; pest and insects coming onto your farm from farms with infections; and food and water. Start by identifying the potential pathogen threats for your specific farm/ranch and species and their mode of transmission, and then look at ways to minimize the risks. Remember: sound biosecurity practices do not have to be expensive, but need to be adhered to by everyone on farm.

The table (left) provides the basic, routine biosecurity measures that should be in place on all farms and ranches to minimize the spread of pests and diseases. Remember: Different pests and diseases come with different risks, and they are not always apparent.

For more information about practical, science-based advice on high-welfare livestock management, visit [Farm Health Online](http://FarmHealthOnline.com) at [farmhealthonline.com](http://farmhealthonline.com)

LUIS SANTOS



CHALACORRE FARM

## Certification news

# WHAT ARE YOU FEEDING?

Feeding compliant ingredients is important to maintaining certification, says Tim Holmes

Every year, our auditors find approved farmers and ranchers who are unwittingly offering mineral blocks and other feedstuffs containing prohibited materials, including animal by-products, antibiotics, growth promoters and organophosphates. While this can cause serious compliance problems, it is easily prevented. Any feedstuff you buy should always come with a list of ingredients, so here are some things to look out for—and avoid.

### Animal protein products

Many feed products are labeled “ruminant meat and bone meal free,” but don’t assume this means “no animal by-products.” We regularly find porcine and poultry by-products and fishmeal in feeds and mineral blocks labeled as ruminant meat and bone meal free. Feather meal (dehydrated feathers and bones from chicken processing) is an ingredient in some Sweetlix® EnProAI® and Bovalyx ranges, advertised for supplementing cattle on pasture. “Natural” is another much abused label claim: The Kay Dee Hi-EN-R-GY 20 “All Natural” Tub, for example, lists “animal protein products” in its ingredients. Some feed manufacturers only list “protein products” on the feed label, without stating whether this is plant or animal protein. In order to issue you with an AWA certificate, we need to know what kind of protein it is.

Fishmeal or other aquatic products are often used in feeds, particularly in poultry and starter feeds for pigs. While AWA standards permit sustainably sourced fishmeal for pigs and poultry only, you must ensure these ingredients are from sustainable sources before using the feed. By-products of aquatic species caught or farmed for human consumption and/or those from verified sustainable fisheries, such as the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) mark, may be classed as sustainable. If in doubt, check with us first.

### Grassfed supplements

You can offer mineral and vitamins to Certified Grassfed by AGW ruminants to keep them in good health, but protein or feed tubs are not acceptable.

If the tub or block contains 20 percent protein or higher, we regard it as a protein tub and it must not be given to grassfed animals. If it contains less than 20 percent protein you will still need to look at the expected daily intake. If the daily intake is greater than 3 pounds/day for cattle, or more than 5 ounces/day for sheep and goats, it is unsuitable.

Molasses can be used as a binder or carrier in mineral and vitamin supplements, but not as a feed. For example, pouring liquid molasses over hay is not acceptable for Certified Grassfed by AGW animals. In general, two of the first three ingredients on any grassfed supplement product label must be a mineral or source of a mineral, and neither of the first two ingredients on the product label can include sources of grain, protein or processed grain by-products. Labels that list “plant protein” or “plant protein products” as one of the first two ingredients are also unacceptable, as there is no way to identify whether this plant protein is a grain or grain by-product.

### Antibiotics and growth promoters

Look out for mineral blocks containing antibiotics. Chlortetracycline seems to be the drug of choice, though others may be found. The growth promoter sodium monensin—trade name ‘Rumensin’—is also common. All are prohibited.

### Organophosphates

Organophosphate (OP) insecticides are prohibited under AWA standards. OPs act on the nervous system and are suspected of causing ill health in hundreds of farmers who regularly used these products. They frequently turn up in feed and mineral blocks as wormers or for fly control. Some anti-fly ear tags also contain OPs, so a product information check is worthwhile here, too.

In summary, make sure you know what you are feeding. Animal by-products and other undesirable additives can turn up in unusual places, so check your labels carefully. If you’re ever in doubt, contact us first—we’ll be glad to help you.

Tim Holmes is AWA’s Director of Compliance



## 🌱 Meet the farmer

# DIVERSIFYING IN NEW YORK

Michael and Karma Glos and their daughter, Rosemary, raise Certified AWA laying hens, meat chickens, ducks, beef cattle and pigs at Kingbird Farm in Berkshire, New York, where they began farming together in 1996.

### Tell us about your farm ...

Karma and I both pursued environmental degrees in college, where we met. After interning on organic farms in Washington and Maine, we knew we wanted to have our own farm. We moved to New York for the moderately priced land, available markets and to be closer to my family. We started out with poultry and vegetables, and quickly diversified. Today, we produce Certified Organic and Certified AWA pork, chicken, eggs and duck, in addition to produce and plants. We also raise and sell Certified Organic and Certified AWA feeder pigs, and raise Certified AWA beef cattle. We do all our own animal breeding, and have developed our own “Kingbird” broilers.

### Describe a typical day ...

Being a diversified farm means we have a very diverse day! It depends on the time of year, but we may be moving fences, making sure waters work, moving animals, loading hay, watering the greenhouse, planting, harvesting ... We're always with the animals in the morning and evenings.

### Sustainable farming principles: why do they matter?

It's our responsibility to leave the land better than we found it, so that people can continue producing food. Not just the land, but the world.

### What's the main benefit of being Certified AWA?

Certified AWA is not just a label or a marketing advantage: it's more than that. Some businesses may look for a label they can stick on their package and never have to change anything, because they want it purely for marketing and business reasons. While being Certified AWA provides a marketing advantage, the real goal for us is to practice the highest animal welfare standards—and to then use the AWA label to confirm it.

### Who are your customers?

We attend the Ithaca Farmers Market every Saturday from April to December, moving to an indoor location for winter. We also sell to the GreenStar Cooperative Market in Ithaca. Our products are also available from our self-serve farm store.

### What are your business plans for the future?

We'd like to stay about the same size we are now. We've been tweaking things and making the farm more efficient, but we aren't trying to grow. We don't believe endless growth is sustainable. We've found a level we're comfortable with.

### How can the market for Certified AWA products be improved?

Many farms pursue AWA certification because it's meaningful to them and the animals, but then don't necessarily flaunt their achievement. For the sake of consumer education, it's important to share this with your customers. We tell our customers what a Certified AWA farm has to do to meet the requirements, including the thorough farm audit and records inspection. It's a lot!

### What is the biggest threat to the sustainable farming movement?

There are many, but the co-opting of the marketplace for truly organic and/or high-welfare food by farms that want to be perceived as meeting these standards when they don't is a major concern. Words like “local” or “natural” when used with idyllic images can go a long way to mislead customers into buying food without much substance. The attributes of what a customer thinks they're buying and what they are actually buying should be the same; unfortunately, that is not always the case. Not all claims are equivalent or verified. Educating customers, complete transparency, and sometimes exposing deception, is important.

### What's your vision for the future?

Small farms interconnected with the communities they serve.



ROSEMARY GLOS (x2)

### AT A GLANCE

**Farm:** Kingbird Farm, Berkshire, NY  
**Certification/date:** Certified AWA 2012  
**Size:** 100 acres (pasture 20 acres, crops 2 acres and woodland 77 acres)  
**Altitude:** 1,235 ft  
**Annual rainfall:** 41 inches  
**Enterprises:** Tamworth pigs; Australorp laying hens; “Kingbird” broilers; Pekin ducks. Sell Certified AWA beef, pork, duck, chicken and chicken eggs

Find out more at [kingbirdfarm.com](http://kingbirdfarm.com) or find them on Facebook

Karma and Michael Glos



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