

*Successfully Direct Marketing
Grass-Based Meat:
Lessons from Three Iowa Farms*



**Prepared by Practical
Farmers of Iowa with
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Overview

- Background and Methodology
- Focus Group Results
- Case Study Results
- Conclusions

Background and Methodology

- Phase 1: Consumer Focus Groups in MN, WI, IA
- Phase 2 – Consultant's Work with Producer/Marketers Developing Messages and Marketing Strategies
- Phase 3 – Consultant's Work with Producer/Marketers Developing Marketing Brochure
- Phase 4 – Creation of Case Studies

Focus Groups: Reaction to Terms

Analyzed: free range, pasture raised, grass fed, natural

Free Range

- + Many clear ideas about the meaning.
- Most, however, said it adds little or no value.

Pasture Raised

- + Nearly all think of cows – dairy and beef.
- + Some think of rolling green hills/ “traditional” family farm.

Focus Groups: Reaction to Terms

Analyzed: free range, pasture raised, grass fed, natural

Grass Fed

- + Brings cows to mind, elicits many comments.
- Some were confused.
- Some expressed concern about taste.

Natural

- + Many say they know what it should mean, but..
- Has become little more than a marketing term they don't always trust.

Focus Groups: Reaction to Description of Type of Production

Refers to techniques used to produce meat, poultry and dairy products with a focus on feeding and raising the animals on pasture (grass-fed diets) as opposed to raising animals in highly confined and concentrated facilities.

Focus Groups: Reaction to Description of Type of Production

Benefits

- + Healthier
- + Less toxins, taste better
- + Lower fat content
- + Fewer antibiotics, hormones
- + Lower contamination/reduced e-coli risk)
- + More wholesome food

Focus Groups: Reaction to Description of Type of Production



Benefits

- + More humane
- + Healthier for animal
- + Less disease
- + More natural production method

Focus Groups: Reaction to Description of Type of Production

Concerns

- Affect of on taste
- Affect of on texture of product
- Quality of pasture
- Ingestion of manure before it is fully decomposed
- Uncertainty about supplemental feed

Reaction to Messages

Meat Products

We pasture animals to produce a superior quality meat product- superior in taste, environmental stewardship and animal well-being.

32	<i>Very likely</i>
34	<i>Somewhat likely</i>
1	<i>Somewhat unlikely</i>
0	<i>Not that likely</i>

Reaction to Messages

Meat Products

Our pasture-raised meat tastes better, is healthier and protects our environment.

19	<i>Very likely</i>
36	<i>Somewhat likely</i>
8	<i>Somewhat unlikely</i>
4	<i>Not that likely</i>

Reaction to Messages

Dairy Products

All natural grass-fed milk is an excellent source of nutrition, good for you, good for the environment and good for the cows.

16	<i>Very likely</i>
27	<i>Somewhat likely</i>
21	<i>Somewhat unlikely</i>
3	<i>Not that likely</i>

Reaction to Messages

Dairy Products

Giving our cows access to high quality pasture assures them a constant supply of fresh grasses and clover throughout the growing season. This low stress environment, with fresh air and sunshine, results in better herd health and superior quality milk for our dairy products

28	<i>Very likely</i>
23	<i>Somewhat likely</i>
12	<i>Somewhat unlikely</i>
3	<i>Not that likely</i>

Reaction to Messages

Poultry Products

Our chickens are raised naturally in the fresh air and sunshine. They are pastured and moved daily so they have fresh greenery under their feet. What this means to our customers is that our tender poultry cooks quickly, has much less fat, and they taste wonderful.

16	<i>Very likely</i>
22	<i>Somewhat likely</i>
21	<i>Somewhat unlikely</i>
7	<i>Not that likely</i>

Reaction to Messages

Poultry Products

Our chickens are free range birds and their feed is free of antibiotics. They get to walk around during their lives as compared to factory birds which don't get to go outside or leave their pens.

20	<i>Very likely</i>
28	<i>Somewhat likely</i>
10	<i>Somewhat unlikely</i>
7	<i>Not that likely</i>

Focus Groups: Essential Elements

- Brief and to the point
 - example: *We pasture animals to produce a superior quality meat product.*
- Easy to understand
 - example: *Our chickens are free range birds and their feed is free of antibiotics.*
- Direct benefits to the customer
 - example: *Our poultry has much less fat and tastes wonderful.*

Focus Groups: Words, Phrases That Work

- Tastes great, fresh
- High quality, superior quality
- Good for you, healthy
- Free of antibiotics, hormones
- Chemical free
- Low in fat
- Excellent source of nutrition

Focus Groups: Words, Phrases That Work



- Not confined
- Fresh air
- Sunshine
- Fresh grass
- High quality pasture

Focus Groups: Opportunities to Marketing Pasture Raised Products

- Openness to trying these products
- People care most about quality food & healthy options for their families
- People can identify many benefits of pasture-raised products
- Strong support for local producers
- People care about animal well-being

Focus Groups: Barriers to Marketing Pasture Raised Products

- Lack of trust in unknown sources – particularly those seen as unregulated or lacking standards
- Expect pasture-raised products will cost more, which means they expect more
- Concerns about affect on taste
- Need for convenience—access and prep
- Resistance to buying in larger volumes

Focus Groups: Key Findings

1. Key benefits must be for the consumer
2. Healthy is the goal – not at expense of taste
3. Disease and bacteria cause most concern
4. Locally-produced rates high
5. Animal welfare important
6. Some see the benefit to family farmers

Focus Groups:

Key Findings (continued)

7. Respondents aren't quick to see environmental benefits
8. Convenience and price matter
9. Corporate or local farmer, trust is lacking
10. Respondents shop variety places, but convenience is key

Focus Groups:

Key Findings (continued)

11. Definitions, standards and certification important
12. Incentives get respondents to try a new product.
13. Consumers suffer from information overload

Focus Groups: Implications

- 1) Focus on direct benefits, like “better tasting” and especially “healthy” attributes.
- 2) Promote these and other key benefits (antibiotic & hormone free, environmentally friendly, animal well-being, etc.) and using simple terms and phrases
- 3) Taste and tenderness are important, and grass-fed meats tend to rate lower – find ways to address this
- 4) Price is an issue to be addressed

Focus Groups:

Implications (continued)

- 5) Food safety is a huge concern - address it head on
- 6) Consider certifying claims to address lack of trust and desire for definitions
- 7) Convenience – easy ordering and accessing of product – must be addressed

ALL NATURAL GRASS FED BEEF

- Growth Hormone Free
- Anti-biotic Free
- Healthy Fats and Cholesterol
- Humanely Raised
- Sustainable Practices
- Tender, Juicy and Delicious



Case Studies

- Nan Bonfils and Don Adams,
Full Circle Farm beef
- Tom and Kristi German, Thankful
Harvest Tenderheart Beef
- Scott Weinberg,
Planned Lamb Sheep Farm

Case Studies: Markets Before

- Full Circle and Germans were marketing direct to customers in bulk and individual cuts at local natural food stores.
- Weinberg primarily to Bosnian immigrant community in Waterloo

Case Studies: Marketing Before

- All three relied mainly on word of mouth.
- Germans enjoyed some brand recognition from exposure at health food store. Doctors were beginning to recommend their product.
- Full Circle developed a basic brochure, invited customers to annual event at farm, and donated product to fundraisers, etc.

Case Studies:

Goals

- Nan and Don hoped to increase interaction with chefs and restaurants and improve marketing around issue of meat preparation.
- Germans wanted to highlight the differences between pasture-raised and conventional grain-fed beef as well as develop a subscription program for frozen beef cuts.
- Weinberg hoped to focus marketing to restaurants and grocery stores.

Case Studies:

Messages, Full Circle Farm

- Flavorful
- Easily prepared
- Nutritious
- Convenient
- Sustainable
- Humane
- Local

Case Studies:

Messages, Tenderheart

- Flavorful
- Nutritious (what it has)
- Nutritious (what it doesn't have)
- Convenient
- Processed locally
- Environmentally friendly

Case Studies:

Messages, Planned Lamb Sheep Farm

- Flavorful
- Seasonal
- Local
- Nutritious
- Healthy
- Environmentally responsible
- Humane

Case Studies: Brochure Distribution

- Nan and Don distributed brochure at field days, a nearby farm stand, and a health food store when they sampled beef there. They also respond to inquiries by mailing the brochure
- The Germans: To potential customers in person and through the mail. Also to additional doctor's offices.
- Weinberg: Mostly to potential customers who requested more info. Also at art shows where he sells his iron sign creations.

Case Studies: Measuring Success

- Full Circle: “I don’t know that it’s a deal clincher, but very few people who get the brochure [in the mail] fail to make a purchase.” – Nan Bonfils
- The Germans: Successful in reaching new customers, especially those interested in health benefits of the product.
- Weinberg: More effective in drawing new customers than retaining existing ones. Successful in appealing to an “upscale” clientele.

Case Studies:

Most Effective Messages

- Full Circle: Antibiotic- and hormone-free message followed by pasture-raised
- The Germans: The health message.
“This is all about healthy food. It’s about doctors telling their patients they should eat better, and those people coming to us.” – Tom German
- Weinberg: Health and nutrition followed by taste
“I would like taste to be the aspect, but I don’t think they really believe me until they actually try it.” –Scott Weinberg

Case Studies:

Other comments

- Both Full Circle and the Germans said the brochure saved them time.
- Full Circle: The brochure increased customers they didn't know from half to 75-80%
- Weinberg: Success depended his strong sense of which marketing messages he wanted to stress. Consultant a big help in provided new ideas and help in how to word things.

Case Studies:

Other comments (continued)

- Both Full Circle and the Germans chose the comprehensive approach (lots of info) and were happy with it.
- Full Circle led with benefits to consumers and included cooking tips.
- “We rewrote that material a lot, and each time it got a little bit better. Today, I don’t know if I would change anything.”
– Scott Weinberg

Conclusions

- Consumer research with practical applications
- Consultant and farmers make a good team
- Costs are a factor
- A great benefit to participating farmers.

“It was a terrific effort.” –Tom German

“It was a blast.” – Nan Bonfils

Brochure example: Full Circle Farm

Full Circle Farm Pasture Raised Angus Beef

- Locally raised with humane care at Full Circle Farm, Madrid, Iowa
- Fed 100% organically grown vegetarian diet
- Graze certified organic pastures—no chemical fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides are used
- Not given antibiotics or growth-promoting hormones
- Custom processed locally in small batches

Part of a Larger Circle

We are committed to the vitality of our local community, and want the high quality food we grow to contribute to the well being of the folks around us. Our customers can depend on us and our local processors to provide premium quality meat, safe and humane processing, and custom options, while circulating more food dollars in our local economy. Our field days are an opportunity to open up the farm for walking and talking, and sharing our abundance of foods. Other visits are welcome by appointment.

We strive to be a preferred local source for natural beef—chosen for its flavor, nutritional content, freedom from contaminants, and affordable value.

FULL CIRCLE FARM

Raised With Care Near Madrid, Iowa



DON ADAMS AND NAN BONHIS
TELEPHONE 515.795.1268 • EMAIL: FULLCIRCLEFARM@ORNCORPINC.COM

◆ PASTURE RAISED ◆

Angus Beef
LEAN, ALL NATURAL

*Tender,
moist,
robust beef
flavor*

FULL CIRCLE FARM

Raised With Care Near Madrid, Iowa



DON ADAMS AND NAN BONHIS

Brochure example: Tenderheart

About Our Farm, Our Family

Tom and Kristi German



The farm we live on has been in Tom's family for three generations going on four. The family has been raising beef and poultry here since 1936. For that matter, as long as anyone can recall, members of the family have lived on farms in Iowa. We both grew up on farms, Tom on this one.

We both earned college degrees and worked in business before returning to this farm with a deep desire to raise healthy food and healthy children while supporting the entire system—from soil to humans—with earth sustaining methods that provide wonderful food and economic sustenance.

We began the pasture based system in 1993 and our transition to organic in 1999. We are dedicated to artisan, family scale farming—a scale that provides us an intimate relationship with the land, the animals, what goes into production, the fruits of our labors and the people who come to rely on us for delicious and nourishing food.

Bonus! Quick Cooking, Less Cleanup

One pleasant discovery we've made, as we prepare steaks and roasts and burgers from our own beef, is the fact that grass fed beef cooks faster. Meat can be cooked to perfection in less time. But, success in the kitchen does require an attentive eye. Many who prepare and dine on grass fed beef tend to cook it slightly less well done than they would conventional beef. It's still healthy and safe, and it preserves the tenderness most people prefer.

Of course, when meat is leaner, by definition, there's less fat in it. Less fat in the meat means less fat left over after cooking, so cleanup is less messy.

For more information, or to place an order:

Tom and Kristi German Thankful Harvest 5139 210 th Street Holstein, IA 51025-8061	Phone: 712-365-4433 E-mail: tagermans@tactic.net Visit our web page on www.eatwild.com.
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ARTISAN QUALITY • SMALL HERD HUSBANDRY
ECOLOGICAL MANAGEMENT

TenderHeart™

TenderHeart Beef

Pasture Raised With Care
for Outstanding Flavor
and Healthy Living



Administered No:

- Antibiotics
- Hormones

Contains No:

- Chemical Preservatives
- Chemical Pesticides, Fertilizers or Herbicides

Studies show that pasture raised (grass fed) beef is

Naturally high in:

- Health promoting Essential Fatty Acids
- Vitamin E

Naturally low in:

- Saturated Fats
- Cholesterol
- Calories

3 Convenient Buying Options!
(See details inside.)

Brochure example: Planned Lamb

THE DELICATE, WORLDLY FLAVOR OF LAMB PERFECTED ON IOWA PASTURE

Lamb is a meat that's long been appreciated around the world for its sweet, mild and complex flavor — from Europe to Africa, India, Mexico and North America. Now, our gently rolling Iowa meadows are proving to be a perfect home for raising the perfect lamb.

We've selected and raise only the Dorper breed, developed solely for the quality of its meat.

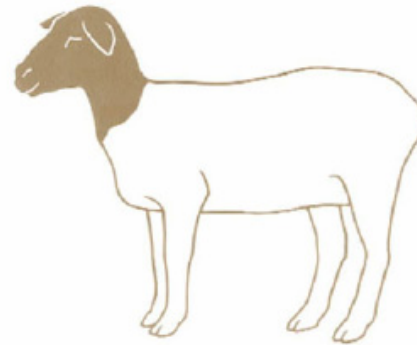


With naturally suited outdoor pasture life and diet, and our winter harvest cycle, we're able to bring out the best in the outstanding qualities the Dorper has to offer.

BORN AND RAISED ON GRASS — NOURISHING EVERYONE

All of our animals are born, weaned and raised on our pastures, so we can guarantee that they're healthy and always have been. They spend 95% of their time on pasture, getting plenty of fresh air and clean water as they roam year 'round on a circuit of large open plots.

They derive the bulk of their nourishment from pasture plants, including tender grasses, clovers and other legumes. This is the diet natural to sheep, and therefore provides them optimum nutrition and health. In turn, they produce a lean, healthy, nutrient dense and protein rich meat.



DORPER: THE CHAMPAGNE OF LAMB

Developed in South Africa during the 1930's as a cross of the Black Headed Persian and Dorset Horn, the Dorper was bred for its lean, tender meat, its broad frame and ideal muscling. In addition to its rich flavor and tenderness, research tests show that, when cooked, Dorper meat actually shrinks less than meat from other standard favorite North American breeds.

Dorpers are hardy and mild mannered, and do exceptionally well in varied and extreme environments. So, lucky for us, neither Iowa's winters nor hot dry summers are able to dim their innate ability to thrive and produce wonderful meat.