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ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED FARM ACCREDITATIONS EXPANDING RAPIDLY

Family Farmers Enjoy Many Benefits to Being Approved by the Animal Welfare Institute-- Program Offered Free of Charge to Farmers

Washington, D.C. — “Family farmers are the heart of this great country,” said Willie Nelson, a longtime supporter of high-welfare treatment of animals. “At their heart is a deep love and respect for the land and the animals they raise.”

And consumers--in an effort to ensure the safety of the food they eat and to support independent family farms--are demanding local foods and products which are independently verified as coming from farms that meet high standards for animal welfare. At the top of these accreditation programs is Animal Welfare Institute’s (AWI) “Animal Welfare Approved.”

“Animal Welfare Approved” is a seal granted for meat, poultry, dairy and eggs. More than 600 farms comply with AWI’s standards, which provide consumers, grocers, chefs and other food buyers a single comprehensive seal to differentiate high-welfare family farms from agribusinesses that subject animals to cruel and unnatural conditions. “The Animal Welfare Approved seal is a badge of honor for family farmers, since their attention to the health and well-being of their animals results in humane practices that serve as a model for all.” continued Willie Nelson.

AWI’s standards address all aspects of an animal’s life starting with genetic soundness through opportunities to socialize and behave naturally to assurances of comfort and freedom from intensive confinement. Every Animal Welfare Approved farm is an independent family farm and farmers must adhere to Animal Welfare Approved standards for all animals of an approved species—no split or dual production is permitted. The program, offered free of charge to farmers, is helping to revitalize a culture of family-owned and managed farms, out of a belief that family farmers have a true connection to and stake in the health of their animals--something that has been lost in industrial factory farming. Unlike other verification programs, farmers pay no fees to participate in the Animal Welfare Approved program.

One Animal Welfare Approved turkey farmer and nationally recognized poultry expert is **Frank Reese**, a fourth generation farmer from Lindsborg, Kansas. Frank’s operation has come a long way since he sold his first 800 heritage turkeys in 2002. Thanks to his coalition of six farmers and help from the State of Kansas and Kansas State University, more than 10,000 rare breed turkeys were raised this year, direct descendents of the first domesticated flocks of these breeds which were raised throughout our nation's history. Standard Breds include five primary breeds: Bronze, Bourbon Red, Narragansett, Black and White Holland. Before Frank’s breeding program



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went into effect, these traditional turkey breeds had been largely lost with the onset of large scale breeding for the mass market.

Frank Reese Jr. owns and operates Good Shepherd Turkey Ranch where he lives out his vision to be the premiere source of high quality authentic heritage poultry in the United States. Through careful selection and breeding, high-welfare farming and safe processing, he aims to consistently satisfy the discriminating consumer's desire for authentic heritage products. Good Shepherd's turkeys have been consistently voted the best tasting birds on the market by chefs and food writers including those at *Bon Appetit*, *Saveur* and *Food & Wine* magazines. Good Shepherd Ranch turkeys are Animal Welfare Approved: www.reeseturkeys.com.

Another Animal Welfare Approved success story centers around **Paul Willis**, who lives on the farm where he grew up in Thornton, Iowa. Paul manages a large network of family hog farmers for Niman Ranch. Paul's passions have always included animals and taking care of the land. **Niman Ranch** pork products are featured on many Chipotle restaurant menus and at fine dining restaurants nationwide as well as on select grocery shelves.



In 1995, Paul was looking for a way to market natural "free range" pigs when he met Bill Niman. Paul wanted to revitalize traditional hog farming in the Midwest at a time when economics were forcing many farmers to sell out or turn to factory/confinement keeping of hogs. Niman Ranch offered the opportunity for farmers to raise pigs in a high-welfare traditional way and these outdoor-raised pigs quickly became a favorite choice for consumers.

In addition to managing the Niman Ranch pork operation, Paul raises 2,500 Farmers' Hybrid hogs on the Willis Free Range Pig Farm. Niman Ranch pork products are Animal Welfare Approved and available through its website at: www.nimanranch.com.

Animal Welfare Approved products are available from Cates Family Farm, Drakes Bay Family Farms, Cane Creek Farm, Parker Farms, MAE Farm, Willow Creek Farm, Good Shepherd Turkey Ranch, Whitmore Farms, and from meat companies including Niman Ranch, William's Pork, and Heritage Foods USA. Animal Welfare Approved products are available nationally at many Whole Foods Markets, Wild Oats and Trader Joe's and dozens of restaurants.

Farmers interested in receiving information about the program may contact Lauren Riga at the Animal Welfare Institute at (703) 836-4300 or email info@animalwelfareapproved.org. Information is also available at www.animalwelfareapproved.org.

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Animal Welfare Approved is a program of the Animal Welfare Institute (AWI). For over 50 years, the nonprofit Institute has worked to reduce the pain and fear humans inflict on animals. AWI promotes humane farming practices and fights the growth of animal factories for the benefit of animals, consumers, farm families, rural communities and the environment. For more information, visit www.AWIONline.org.

Animal Welfare Approved...protecting animals, supporting family farmers,
serving consumers and caring for our environment.