



THE FORMULA FOR SUCCESS IT'S NO COINCIDENCE: HIGH-WELFARE, SUSTAINABLE FARMING MEANS HIGH-QUALITY, AWARD-WINNING FOOD

Animal Welfare Approved and farmers in the program have been sharing some great news lately. From major food awards to rankings as the nation's "most stringent" welfare label, it seems that we all have a lot to celebrate these days.

Humane Farm Animal Care recently published a comprehensive comparison of the major farm animal welfare labels—including AWA, USDA Organic, American Humane Certified, GAP (Global Animal Partnership/Whole Foods Market) and Certified Humane. The online comparison chart assesses key elements of the standards for each of the labels, such as outdoor access for animals, antibiotic use, transparency and potential managerial conflicts of interest. Across the board, AWA was consistently ranked as the most rigorous, requiring pasture access and grass-based production.

We are proud that this research once again affirms that products bearing the AWA label come from farms dedicated to the well-being of animals, raised on a family farm, outdoors on pasture or range as nature intended.

But as the old saying goes, "the proof is in the pudding." And there can be no better proof than the recent spate



Karrie Kimble

Jude Becker of Becker Lane Organic Farm, IA (above) supplies the pasture-raised pork used to create LaQuercia's award winning Organic Green Label Prosciutto.

of awards granted to AWA foods in recognition of their high quality.

At the recent World Cheese Awards in Birmingham, UK, AWA-certified Consider Bardwell Farm of West Pawlet, VT, received a Gold Medal for its Manchester semi-hard goat's milk cheese (also see page 3). The World Cheese Awards is the largest cheese competition in the world, attracting more than 2,600 cheeses from 29 countries—making this a truly outstanding achievement.

In January, artisan dry cured meat specialist LaQuercia in Norwalk, IA, won the top award at the inaugural Good Food Awards for its Organic Green Label Prosciutto, which is made exclusively with AWA pasture-raised pork from Becker Lane Organic Farm in Dyersville, IA. The Good Food Awards celebrate outstanding American food producers and the farmers who provide their ingredients. Almost 800 entries from 41 states vied

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for "best in class" awards in chocolate, cheese, charcuterie, coffee, beer, pickles and preserves.

The *Raleigh News & Observer* restaurant critic, Greg Cox, recently awarded "Restaurant of the Year" to Bella Mia, the coal-fired pizzeria in Cary, NC. AWA is proud that all of the beef used by Bella Mia is supplied by Rare Earth Farms of Zebulon, NC. In the same awards, AWA farms—including Border Springs Farm (lamb), Cane Creek Farm (pork), Captain John S. Pope Farm (lamb), Cohen Farm (eggs), Fowl Attitude Farm (eggs), and High Ground Farm (eggs)—were suppliers to the Gold, Silver and Best in Class award winners.

"Whether it's winning awards or winning new customers, I applaud the commitment and dedication of all our farmers," says AWA's program director, Andrew Gunther. "In my opinion, it is no coincidence that, time and again, best practice, high welfare and sustainable farming systems are producing award-winning food of the highest quality."



DEAR FRIENDS,

One of the things I enjoy most about working in high-welfare, sustainable agriculture is the positive attitude of those involved. I'm regularly humbled by the willingness of our farmers to share advice and information, and their desire to work together for the common good. Perhaps it has something to do with seeing the bigger picture.

Nowhere is this exemplified more than in our Marketing 101 article on pages 8-9. Here we have a group of farmers willing to share their experiences and routes to success. Whether you're selling wholesale or direct to consumers—or thinking about doing either—I'm sure you will learn something from this article.

What also stood out was their combined message on the importance of educating the public—who are our customers—about the benefits of how we farm. Indeed, spreading the word about sustainable farming systems sometimes necessitates telling a few home truths about the weaknesses of industrialized farming. It's a fine line to walk and we've been accused of attempting to "pit farmer against farmer," or of trying to drive a wedge between farming communities. Yet nothing could be further from the truth.

From a purely business perspective, I'm only too aware that every farmer out there is potentially the next to join the AWA program. Purposefully raising the hackles of farmers would hardly serve the interests of the program. We're not interested in creating an army of "hobby farms" or in taking "farming back to the Dark Ages," as some of our critics have claimed. Our interest is the very future of farming; and our argument is with the industrialized farming system.

Let's be clear: this is no one-way street. The industrialized farming lobby is a multimillion-dollar public relations machine. As criticism of industrialized farming has grown, this machine has been extraordinarily effective in convincing the public and politicians alike that intensive agriculture is the *only* viable option, and that sustainable farming is nothing more than a "niche" concern. Our techniques are "unscientific," "inefficient" and "irrelevant." And now we're being told that industrialized farming is the only "environmentally friendly" option because it produces more from less. The fact that we are *all* paying for the hidden costs of industrialized farming, and that we cannot maintain current levels of consumption and waste, is all too conveniently ignored in the name of corporate profit.

So I have no qualms whatsoever in setting the record straight where I can, for highlighting the weaknesses of the industrialized farming model, and for shouting about the mounting scientific evidence in favor of truly sustainable approaches to farming. I know you share our vision of a sustainable future for family farming, and you will agree that our farming techniques are now more relevant than ever. Some of you already take part in open houses and farm tours, but I hope you will all play your part in taking this message to your friends, family and farming neighbors. Let's use every opportunity we can to spread the word and let people know about the great work that you are all doing.



Mike Suarez

We need to use every opportunity we can to spread the word about the benefits of high-welfare, sustainable farming (see page 9 for information about AWA brochures and other materials).

Andrew Gunther
Program Director

A DREAM COME TRUE

Angela Miller farms dairy goats on 300 acres at Consider Bardwell Farm in West Pawlet, VT, with her husband, Rust Glover. They recently received a gold medal for their Manchester semi-hard goat milk cheese at the World Cheese Awards in Birmingham, UK.

Consider Bardwell was an entrepreneurial genius who lived in the mid-1800s in West Pawlet, VT. He founded the first cheese-making co-op at his farm in 1864. Neighboring dairy farmers hauled their milk to his “factory” every morning in horse-drawn wagons. The Delaware and Hudson railroad rumbled across his farmland each week and the wheels of cheddar were shipped to Albany and Boston.

In 2000, my husband Rust Glover, an architect, and I were casually looking for land near Dorset, VT. We knew nothing about Consider Bardwell, but stumbled across a photo listing of his beautiful brick house and the largest bank barn I’d ever seen. We went to see it and fell in love at first sight. Next day it was ours.

The farm was so beautiful, the buildings so historically important, and the land so extensive that we jumped in and did research and learned about the history of the farm. We were so excited about this new challenge in our lives, which dovetailed perfectly with my lifelong passion for cheese, and my experience with top-notch chefs and food writers in my NYC job as a literary agent specializing in food books that we decided to resurrect and revitalize Consider Bardwell’s dairy and cheese making farm business.

We quickly decided on Oberhasli goats, which are an Alpine breed. We bought a small herd of extraordinarily beautiful, friendly, and well-endowed does, all of whom immediately stole my heart. The goats became my primary responsibility and pleasure. I found them exceedingly intelligent and learned that their emotional range is huge and profound. I saw them thrilled, eager, loving each other, missing each other, in pain, happy, and sad. Our mission statement had been that we would



Yearling Oberhasli goats at Consider Bardwell Farm, VT.

make “world-class cheeses from the milk of happy, healthy goats, using environmentally and financially sustainable practices,” and that statement has guided us consistently through the past eight years.

Rust meanwhile set about to create a cheese making facility that would pass muster with the USDA. He had the background in architecture, as well as a huge well of common sense to get the job done correctly and quickly. By July 2004, we were licensed to make and sell cheese, and I threw myself into making contact with chefs and high-end shops. Two weeks into the business, our fresh chèvre was on the menu at Per Se, Thomas Keller’s four-star restaurant. I gave myself a tiny pinch to make sure I wasn’t dreaming.

In the summer of 2005 I was finally selling cheese at NYC Greenmarket’s new City Hall location. A few years later, Greenmarket invited livestock farmers to a luncheon where we were introduced to AWA. I was sold—hook, line and sinker. Three years later, I had time to pick up the phone and set the process in motion. An AWA auditor spent hours one hot August day, reviewing all of our practices and touring the entire farm. We were overjoyed to get our AWA certification so that we could label our products and show customers that our farm takes care of our dairy livestock first and foremost.

We have now garnered many awards for our cheeses. We are milking one hundred goats, and we made 45,000 pounds of cheese in 2010 and still cannot meet the demand, so we are increasing our production to 60,000 pounds. But first and always, it starts with milk from well-managed, healthy animals.

—Angela Miller is author of *Hay Fever: How Chasing a Dream on a Vermont Farm Changed My Life*. Visit www.considerbardwellfarm.com.



Master cheese maker, Peter Dixon, at work. Consider Bardwell sells AWA cheese to shops, restaurants and wholesalers in 14 states.

Photos by Consider Bardwell

AWA GRANTS: WORKING TO IMPROVE WELFARE

The Animal Welfare Approved Good Husbandry Grants initiative was introduced in 2008 to improve farm animal welfare. What have the grants achieved?

Since introducing the Good Husbandry Grants initiative in 2008, AWA has awarded nearly 100 grants to farms and slaughter facilities across the U.S.

The grant program is open to all AWA farmers (including those in the application process) and slaughter plants that are working with AWA farms. The range and scope of applications is increasing every year.

Examples of individual farm projects include plans to convert livestock buildings so they are more welfare friendly, or to build mobile housing for pigs or poultry. Proposals to build fencing to exclude predators, to divide paddocks for better management, or to improve handling facilities across the farm are also common.

MOBILE HOUSING

Scott Hasselmann of Hasselmann Family Farms, Marengo, IL, used his AWA Good Husbandry Grant to build nine portable A-frame huts so his sows could farrow on pasture, rather than the existing outdoor concrete pens, where it was a challenge to keep the sows comfortable and content.



Hasselmann Family Farms was awarded an AWA Good Husbandry Grant to build portable A-frame huts so the sows could farrow on pasture.

Hasselmann Family Farms

“Since moving the sows onto pasture they are healthier and in better body condition,” says Scott. “We can now move the pigs around the farm as part of our crop rotation. The grant was a huge blessing. Not only has it helped improve the welfare of our pigs, but it helped to increase our pork sales, as we can now market ‘pasture-raised’ pork.”

But applications are not just limited to single farms. Indeed, several successful proposals have included projects that involve the sharing of facilities or tools between two or more farms, such as a mobile poultry slaughter unit for use by a number of local farms. The advantage of these types of projects is that a single grant can bring about significant welfare improvements for animals from multiple farms.

SHARED POULTRY PROCESSING UNIT

In 2009, Lee and Domisty Menius of Wild Turkey Farms in Salisbury, NC, won an AWA Good Husbandry Grant to build a mobile poultry processing unit. The unit consists of a stunner, killing cones, propane-heated scalding, plucker and stainless steel tables. A core objective was to rent the unit to other local AWA farmers.

“The unit has been incredibly popular,” says Lee. “Several farms in the area have taken up growing birds because the unit was available. The AWA grant means that small farmers can now process their own chickens on site, reducing stressful transport and producing a better quality product.”

Ensuring high welfare doesn’t stop at the farm gate, and grants are regularly awarded to joint proposals from AWA farmers and their local slaughter plants. Funding new facilities or better stunning or handling equipment not only can facilitate compliance with AWA slaughter standards, but can open up new business opportunities for the plants—meaning higher levels of animal welfare and less stress.

IMPROVING SLAUGHTER FACILITIES

Fruitland American Meat is a small slaughter and processing facility in Jackson, MO. With the support of local AWA farmers, the company won an AWA Good Husbandry Grant in 2008 to purchase a new knock box and make other improvements, enabling it to better accommodate farmers in the area by humanely slaughtering smaller animals such as lambs, hogs, and calves—which it was previously unable to take.

“The changes have made it possible for us to handle smaller animals with less stress and more humane techniques,” says co-owner and livestock veterinarian, Dr. Patricia Whisnant. “The new equipment brings a welfare benefit to multiple farms while opening up an entirely new market for local farmers.”

Other successful proposals include plans to set up on-farm poultry breeding facilities or bring in new genetics so farmers can breed their own animals or introduce new traits to an existing herd or flock that are more appropriate for pasture-based farming.

Proposed projects must meet specific requirements and present a clear budget showing how the funds would be spent. Eligible costs include design fees, contractor costs, materials and special equipment.

A Commitment to Change

The AWA Good Husbandry Grants bring positive and ongoing benefits to farms and farm animals across the nation, helping farms achieve compliance with AWA standards and supporting the adoption of high-welfare



Emily Lancaster

Lee Menius of Wild Turkey Farms demonstrates the plucker at AWA's Mobile Processing Unit Training in Salisbury, NC. Funded by an AWA Good Husbandry Grant, the unit facilitates humane on-farm processing for multiple farms in North Carolina's Piedmont region.

practices. Be on the lookout for an announcement about the next application cycle in the near future.

—Emily Lancaster

AWA GOOD HUSBANDRY GRANTS 2010-11

This year, AWA is delighted to award Good Husbandry Grants to 28 farms and slaughter plants across the U.S., ranging from \$600 to \$6,000:

A&J Farms, Fayette, NY- *Viable outdoor access for poultry*

Abundance Farm, Round Hill, VA- *Improvements in the slaughter process*

Acce Station Meat Farm, Pinetown, NC- *New low-stress loading dock for livestock*

Berry Creek Farm, Blanchard, OK- *Mobile housing for pastured chickens*

Blakes Landing Farms, Marshall, CA- *Calf feeding automation improvements*

Deutsch Family Farm, Osseo, WI- *Improved housing for breeding stock hogs on pasture*

Dutch James Farm, Mt. Hermon, LA- *Infrastructure improvements to maximize welfare*

Eagle Bridge Custom Meat and Smokehouse, Eagle Bridge, NY- *Welfare improvements in the slaughter process*

Ecotone Farm, Joelton, TN- *Mobile processing unit*

Finger Lakes Dexter Creamery, King Ferry, NY- *Improved access to pasture to maximize welfare*

Foxhollow Poultry Farm, Elkhart, IA- *On-farm hatchery*

Fruitland American Meat, LLC, Jackson, MO- *Improved welfare by use of a chin lift system*

GingerSnap Hollow Farms, Harlem, GA- *Fencing and generator project*

Grazin' Angus Acres, Ghent, NY- *Mobile chicken housing*

Hens Nest Farm, Cottonwood, AZ- *Narragansett turkey breeding program*

High Ground Farm, Holly Springs, NC- *Predator fencing*

John Smith Hill's Farm, Spartanburg, SC- *Improvements in processing*

Joyner Farm, Faison, NC- *Mobile shelter for pastured sheep production*

Midsummer Farm, Warwick, NY- *Heritage chicken breeding program*

Nelson Land and Livestock, Wadesboro, NC- *Mobile processing unit*

Old Field Farm, Cornwallville, NY- *Genetic improvement for pastured pig production*

R. Turner Farms, Inc., Albertson, NC- *Mobile housing for pastured hogs*

River Rock Family Farm, South Weber, UT- *Breeding program for heritage breed chickens/ducks*

The Royal Butcher, Braintree, VT- *New squeeze chute*

SMI Farm, Masonville, NY- *On-farm processing facilities*

Terra Firma Farm, Stonington, CT- *Poultry range improvement*

Williams Farm, Magnolia, NC- *Utilizing Port-A-Huts on harvested cropland for hogs*

Windy Ridge Natural Farms, Alfred, NY- *Mobile henhouse for pastured laying hens*

PASTURES FOR PIGS

Pasture-raised pigs spend a large part of their time rooting. While this is an important natural behavior, it doesn't do much for the state of the foraging area. So how can you best manage vegetative cover?

Pigs are incredibly efficient earth movers and will eat leaves and the roots of many plants, leaving behind denuded soil. This bare earth is problematic for two reasons. First, pigs need some vegetation or roughage in their diet and will need supplemental forage once they have destroyed everything in the pen. Secondly, bare earth is a wind and water erosion risk. So, what strategies can help to avoid pig fields from becoming barren deserts or mud baths?

The most important consideration is whether your land is actually suitable for pastured pigs. If you have very heavy soil or very high rainfall, then the answer likely is no. But let's assume you have a suitable site—how best can you prepare and manage it? The key points to consider are: what plants or crops can you grow, what is your stocking density, and how do you rotate the pigs around the available area?

Plants and Crops

You can use crop residues or forage mixes planted specifically for pastured pigs—or more often a combination of the two. Letting pigs onto corn ground after harvest allows them to pick up any spare corn cobs. They'll also eat some of the remaining stalks. Further, pigs will clear vegetable ground after harvest.

If you're planting grass or other forages you have the choice of establishing permanent pastures or sowing annual crops. Although long-term grasses generally wear better and last longer than newly established crops, permanent pastures won't remain permanent once the pigs get onto them. So it is best if other animals that cause less damage get first use of the pastures, before the pigs are rotated onto them. For example, you might establish pastures for grazing cattle, pastured poultry production, or hay crops, and only introduce the pigs when you want to plow and reseed anyway. While perennial grasses such as orchardgrass, tall fescue, timothy and brome grass are not as high in quality as legumes, such as alfalfa and clover, they can be used in mixtures with them. Indeed, grass-legume mixtures can perform as well as legumes alone, and have the advantages of increasing total yields.



Animal Welfare Approved

Maintaining vegetative cover on range and foraging areas for pigs is always challenging. Stocking rates will depend upon soil fertility, quality of pasture, and time of year.

Sowing annual crops means more work and a higher cost than establishing permanent pastures, but it means you can sow crops that will provide feed value for your pigs. In the early 1900s, clover, alfalfa, tares (vetches), and root vegetables were all recommended for pasturing pigs. It's worth searching out pre-1950s pig management books, as significant effort was made to find the right forages before the rise of confinement operations. Today's annual mixes might include sudan grass, field peas, rape, rye grass and oats, and these forages can lower grain and protein supplementation costs. For pregnant sows, good quality forages may replace up to 50 percent of concentrate feed, but only when forages are plentiful. Clover is another good feed for pigs but it doesn't last as long as other crops.

Try to select grasses and forages that have a reasonably long growth period for your farm's climatic conditions—and resist turning pigs out too soon. For example, wait until a rape and oat mix crop is at least 9 inches high.

Stocking Densities

This brings us on to stocking densities. While you want to make the most of your annual crops, you also want them to last as long as possible. Information from the University of Missouri suggests the following pasture stocking rates:

Sows with litters	6–8/acre
Pigs from weaning to 100 pounds	15–30/acre
Pigs from 100 pounds to market	10–20/acre
Gestating sows	8–12/acre

Stocking rates will depend upon soil fertility, quality of pasture, and time of year, so use the figures in the preceding table as a guide. To get the best nutrition from your pasture you need to provide the pigs with plants that are at a young, tender growth stage, but this is also when they are at most risk of being quickly destroyed by rooting activity. So your rotation is also important.

In an ideal world you should remove pigs from a foraging area before they destroy all vegetation. Some farms divide pastures into smaller pens, moving pigs every few weeks. While this provides access to vegetation throughout the growing season, it adds a lot to the workload. Other farms set stock a foraging area for a number of months—expecting the pigs to destroy all vegetation by the time they are moved or are ready for slaughter. This is fine as long as you have other vegetated areas ready for the next batch of pigs. Resting and reseeding foraging areas not only allows for growth and regeneration of vegetation, but also helps with your parasite and disease control program.

The management of foraging areas will depend on the land available, what crops you can grow, and whether you can rotate or link the pigs with other enterprises. Growing dedicated annual crops will not only provide fresh vegetation but can also contribute to your pigs' diet.

—Anna Bassett

FURTHER INFORMATION:

University of Minnesota Extension provides useful advice on designing feeding systems for natural and organic pork production—particularly the forage and pasture sections: www.extension.umn.edu/distribution/livestocksystems/components/7736c05.html

See also the University of Missouri's guide: *Forages for Swine* www.extension.missouri.edu/publications/DisplayPub.aspx?P=G2360

CASE STUDY

"A lot of people don't realize that pigs can graze just like cattle," says Max Turner, of R. Turner Farms, Albemarle, NC. On many farms this might be an exaggeration. But Max's 80 sow farrow-to-finish herd live on carefully managed land with plenty of vegetation and forage to keep them happy.

The farm consists of wooded lots, open pasture and cropping ground. Max grows two main crops on the pasture for the pigs: rye in the winter and pearl millet in the summer, ensuring the pigs have vegetation for much of the year. But it's not just about growing the right crops. "When establishing the crop I don't till too deep, as the land is sandy," Max explains. "If you work it too deep the pigs have a greater tendency to root and dig. You need to keep the soil as firm as you can." It's also important to



Mike Suarez

Max Turner provides his pigs with corn shucks as entertainment and extra forage when other vegetation is scarce.

give the crop sufficient time to establish: "If you put the pigs on too early they tear the plants out by the roots and you won't get a good stand," he cautions.

Max watches the pigs, the weather and the crop carefully. He divides pastures with electric fencing to rest areas, and will occasionally move the pigs to the wooded lots to allow the grass to grow or recover. And if the pearl millet ever gets too far ahead, Max mows it, bales it, and wraps it to feed his cows.

Most of the corn is grown on ground away from the pigs. After harvest, Max bales the corn shucks and gives them to the pigs as entertainment and forage when other vegetation is scarce. Max's philosophy is simple: "If you give the pigs something to do they don't tear the place up." His management certainly ensures the pigs have plenty to do.



MARKETING 101: HOW TO SELL YOUR GOODS

Whether you're selling directly to the public—or to wholesalers in bulk—the most successful farm businesses are those that effectively communicate the attributes of their products to potential customers.



Dan Gibson of Grazin' Angus Acres: "There's a lot of education during our discussions with customers, such as why grassfed is important and why AWA is the gold standard."

As public interest in sustainable food and farming grows, we all know that AWA products fulfill many consumer expectations about animal welfare, environmental responsibility, food safety, health and sustainability. But just like other businesses, the success of every sustainable farm depends on maintaining a sustainable income. That means successfully marketing your products to potential customers—regardless of your

chosen sales channels. We contacted a number of AWA farmers to find out what they've been doing right.

Finding Your Market...

The first thing you need to do is find your market. "We determine our target audience by what qualities they might be looking for," says Tai Johnson-Spratt of Foxhollow Poultry, Elkhart, IA. Foxhollow produces AWA pasture-raised heritage and French breed poultry and eggs. "The chain grocers generally purchase mass-produced chicken from one or two national suppliers. We can't compete with their price or quantity requirements so we take a different route." Tai sells to specialty stores, such as health food stores, specialty grocers and quality restaurants. "These vendors often have consumers who are willing to pay more for better tasting, locally produced, drug-free poultry," she explains.

Dan Gibson of Grazin' Angus Acres raises grassfed Aberdeen Angus cattle on 2,000 acres near Ghent, NY. He takes a very personal approach to marketing. "I prefer to sell direct to consumers," he says. "That's why the vast majority of our sales are at New York's Greenmarkets, where we do the selling ourselves." Dan also sells to select local stores and restaurants. "Only certain restaurants have aligned goals and wait staff who can position your specialty products appropriately," says Dan. "But when you find a restaurant with a common vision make sure they know how special they are!"

Tim Koegel of Windy Ridge Natural Farms in Alfred, NY, produces organic

poultry and eggs, and successfully combines direct marketing alongside sales to distributors, including natural food and grocery stores. "A blend of venues works well for us," he says. "I always keep in mind the law of diminishing returns. In other words, with 20 percent effort I can sell 80 percent of my product, but it will take the remaining 80 percent of my effort to sell the last 20 percent of my product." On this basis, Tim focuses on higher margin direct sales before supplying the rest to wholesale accounts: "At this point I'm usually glad to pay the percentage for the help."

Capturing Your Customers...

So how do you ensure your products stand out in the crowd? The first step is to ensure your product is the best it can be. "Do not cut corners on quality," says Rhonda Gothberg of Gothberg Farms, a specialist dairy goat farm in Bow, WA. "If you cannot do it 'right,' don't do it."

Dan takes great pride in the quality of his cattle. "We know our grassfed-finished Angus is different, better and special," he says. "We acquired superior genetics, cultivated high energy grasses to help with marbling, and allow our animals to live long enough to have a good finish."

But while quality is essential, Tim insists the ability to explain the benefits of how you farm to customers is equally important: "If you don't understand and believe in the benefits of pasturing, organics or humane production, then how can you expect to make buyers understand?"

“We have handouts explaining the difference between Cornish cross birds and our heritage poultry, and between grocery store eggs and our pastured eggs,” says Tai. “Explaining the higher cost to customers is easier if they understand the difference between your AWA products and other farm-raised animals.”

Make the Most of Marketing...

Communicating these values and benefits to potential customers is an essential task for all farming businesses—regardless of the sales channel.

“Marketing is vital to differentiate your product from all the other wannabes out there,” says Tim. Well-designed and colorful labels and marketing materials are proven sales aids. He adds, “Have a great business card, brochure and website. The first impression is everything and dollars spent here are always well worth it.” Attractive, clean, professional displays at farmers’ markets make for a good impression, while attractive packaging that retailers can put directly on their shelves is also important. “Think of what catches your eye at the grocery store and try to mimic that idea in your own way,” advises Tai.

Karen Christensen of Mack Brook Farm near Argyle, NY, could not agree more: “If you can afford it, a graphic designer will make your logo and all marketing materials much more professional. Use the logo on signage, handouts, business cards, T-shirts, and vehicles so your brand gets recognized. And once you are certified AWA put that on everything, too.”

Local advertising is a cost-effective way to increase sales. “Local magazines usually design ads free,” says Karen. “We always talk about what we do in a way that makes it sound like good copy for the magazine. If they don’t do a story, write one and submit it.”

Finally, an online presence is becoming increasingly important—even if you are not selling direct. A simple, well-designed website explaining who you are and what you do, with good images and up-to-date contact information, is a good start.

Final Thoughts...

So is there any key advice for farmers who are just getting in to the AWA program—or thinking of joining?

“Start smaller and grow with your market,” says Rhonda. “But don’t be afraid to blaze some new paths, too.”

“People increasingly want to shake the hand that feeds them,” says

A variety of AWA marketing materials are available to farmers in the program—including quality metal gate signs, sticky labels, vinyl banners (good for farmers’ markets), consumer brochures, post-it notes, buttons, and bumper stickers. To place an order call (800) 373-8806 or visit www.AnimalWelfareApproved.org/farmers/material.

Dan. “Be there and take the time to answer questions—you may be winning a customer for life!”

“Line up buyers before your product is ready,” says Tim. “You can’t stick eggs in a closet for six months until you have a buyer. Above all, know your costs!”

“Do not be afraid to charge a little more than ‘similar’ products,” says Tai. “AWA adds value to your goods by assuring customers that the animals are being treated very humanely.”

“Take every opportunity to speak about your business,” says Karen. “Join local organizations, such as the Chambers of Commerce, and request an information table at local events and, if possible, serve samples of your products.”

—Jill Nado



Amanda Kisner

EDITOR'S NOTE: Thanks to AWA farmers Tai Johnson-Spratt, Dan Gibson, Tim Koegel, Rhonda Gothberg and Karen Christensen for their contributions to this article. Read their full responses on the marketing advice pages of the AWA website—www.AnimalWelfareApproved.org/farmers/marketing-support.

FARMER RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

I want to make sure that everyone is aware of the wide range of free support available through the program.

First, our experienced advisory team is there to answer questions you might have about the standards or the impact of any farm changes you might want to make. Remember: there is no charge for this.

Our website contains a wide range of useful downloadable material, including our *Guide to Understanding Our Standards*, as well the individual livestock standards and the *Slaughter Guidelines for Red Meat*, for example. Our range of *Position Papers* and *Technical Advice Fact Sheets* provide the science behind our standards, as well as practical advice on numerous topics such as the best practice

for castration or avoiding tail docking.

You can also download our range of *Farm Templates and Health Plans* and our practical *Record Keeping* guide. Every issue of the *AWA Newsletter* includes a feature offering technical advice on management topics such as breeding stock selection and lambing (back issues available online). Approved farmers can also use the Farm-to-Farm sales area on the website to list feeder or breeding stock or equipment you have for sale.



A range of on-line resources are available to farmers as part of the AWA program.

Did you know we can provide free labeling assistance to farms in the program? Or that you can order from our range of free promotional materials (see page 9)?

Finally, if you know of any farmers who are interested in learning more about the program, we can help set up a meeting or an event to discuss the standards and possible certification.

Contact us for more information or if you have any questions at (800) 373-8806 or Info@AnimalWelfareApproved.org. We're here to help.

—Tim Holmes

WELCOME NEW FARMS

The Animal Welfare Approved program is happy to announce that the following farms have been accepted into the program:

A&J Farms, Fayette, NY
 Against the Wind Ranch, McDowell, VA
 Angus Glen Farms, LLC, Watkins Glen, NY
 Barbwire Acres, Buhl, ID
 Baum Farm, Canaan, VT
 Black Queen Angus Farm, LLC, Berlin, NY
 Brewer Farm, Wilson, NC
 Cedar Creek Farm, Greeneville, TN
 Chester Farm, Pocahontas, AR
 Consider Bardwell Farm, West Pawlet, VT
 CT Biological Weed and Brush Control, Inc., Wilder, ID
 Edward Lambricht Farm, Orleans, IN
 Eikermann Grassfed Beef, Bourbon, MO
 Fowler Creek Farm, Sonoma, CA
 Gilbert Mill Farm, Stuart, VA

Hare and Feather Heritage Farm, Travelers Rest, SC
 Hawkins Ranch, Graham, TX
 Hens Nest Farm, Cottonwood, AZ
 HesperGarden Ranch & Rescue, LLC, Washington, VT
 Hewkin Farm/Knee Deep Farm, Cuba, MO
 Hiller Farm, McCune, KS
 James Moore Farm, Linden, TN
 Jannah Farm, Greeneville, TN
 Little Creek Ranch, LLC, Liberty, NC
 Markegard Family Grass-Fed, Half Moon Bay, CA
 Morgan Hill Farm, North Hero, VT
 Nelson Ranch, Wadesboro, NC
 Old Field Farm, Cornwallville, NY
 Orange Spring Ranch, Hornitos, CA

Pasture Prime Wagyu, Inc., Summerfield, FL
 Potter 8 Ranch, Loyalton, CA
 Razor Farm, Peace Valley, MO
 Ray Family Farms, Louisburg, NC
 Rose Ranch, High Ridge, MO
 Roses Isle Farms, Calhan, CO
 Saint Bernard Abbey, Cullman, AL
 Simon Boers, Hagerman, ID
 Sparrow's Premium Pork, Grifton, NC
 Sweet Seasons Farm, Valley Head, AL
 Swope Cattle Company, Cuba, MO
 Terra Firma Farm, Stonington, CT
 Triple C Caprines, Scottsbluff, NE
 Triple Hall Farm, Kingsport, TN
 Tweedy Cattle Company, Imboden, AR
 Windy N Ranch, LLC, Ellensburg, WA
 Yellow Wolf Farm, Harmony, NC

We are proud to celebrate the achievements of Animal Welfare Approved farms, friends and partners. Please forward your news to Emily@AnimalWelfareApproved.org

Animal Welfare Approved is taking part in a groundbreaking welfare assessment project, working in partnership with Bristol University Veterinary School, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and the Soil Association of the United Kingdom. The AssureWel project will establish audit procedures to assess the actual *outcome* of standards on farms. Find out more about AssureWel in the next issue.

Foxhollow Poultry Farm in Elkhart, IA, conducted a webinar for Practical Farmers of Iowa on egg production.

White Oak Pastures of Bluffton, GA, is featured in a new cookbook, *Southern My Way* by Gena Knox, and in *Clean Energy Farming* magazine.

Leslie Cooperband of **Prairie Fruits Farm and Creamery** in Champaign, IL, appeared on the Heritage Radio Network's "Cutting the Curd" to discuss farmstead cheese making. Dan Gibson of **Grazin' Angus Acres** in Ghent, NY was also featured.

Whispering Dove Goat Ranch and Apiary of Jacksonville, NC, was profiled in *Max Magazine* and the *Jacksonville Daily News* "Within Driving Distance" blog.

The Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group Conference in Chattanooga featured a tour of **Sequatchie Cove Farm** in Sequatchie, TN.

Consider Bardwell Farm in West Pawlett, VT, and **Gothberg Farms** of Bow, WA, offer apprentice cheese maker programs.



Emily Lancaster

In partnership with AWA, **High Ground Farm** of Duncan, NC, held a Livestock Fencing Workshop to teach fence construction by building a 3-acre predator control fence, funded by an AWA Good Husbandry Grant.

Chaffin Family Orchards' Chris Kerston of Oroville, CA, spoke at the EcoFarm Conference in Pacific Grove, CA. **Soul Food Farm** of Vacaville, CA, was also featured in a screening of the new PBS series, "Kiss the Cook and the Farmer Too."

Abundance Farm in Round Hill, VA, is expanding its alternative energy infrastructure to become 100 percent solar powered.

Minka Farm of Efland, NC, is hosting a class on raising backyard chickens and is teaching the Veterinary Medicine and Beef Cattle Merit Badges units for local Boy Scouts.

The Winter Green-up Grass-fed Beef Conference in Latham, NY, featured workshops by Morgan Hartman of **Black Queen Angus Farm, LLC** in Berlin, NY, and Brett Chedzoy of **Angus Glen Farms, LCC** in Watkins Glen, NY.

This Lil' Piggy Farm of Weirsdale, FL, hosted three 4-H groups for educational tours of the farm's pastured pig operation.

Brett Chedzoy of **Angus Glen Farms, LLC** in Watkins Glen, NY, presented at the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture's conference in State College, PA.

Jody Bolluyt and Jean-Paul Courtens of **Roxbury Farm** in Kinderhook, NY presented at the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York Winter Conference in Saratoga Springs, NY.

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“Animal Welfare Approved offers production expertise, marketing assistance, grants and a host of other resources that really make a difference in our success—and they don’t charge me a dime. This is what we call on the farm ‘a no-brainer’.”

—Tim Koegel, Windy Ridge
Natural Farms in Alfred, NY



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