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**ORGANIC PASTURES DAIRY COMPANY, LARGEST RETAIL-APPROVED RAW MILK DAIRY IN U.S.,  
EARNS ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED SEAL**

**Alexandria, VA**—Animal Welfare Approved, the nation’s leading certification label for family farmers raising their animals outdoors with high-welfare standards, is pleased to welcome Organic Pastures Dairy Company of Fresno, California into the AWA program. Organic Pastures Dairy Company has 500 dairy cows and specializes in bringing raw milk and raw milk products to California consumers.

Organic Pastures was established by the McAfee family, which has been farming in California for four generations. “Our grandparents started dairying in the 1950s,” says Mark McAfee. “We wanted to build on their core principles of trusting nature and being good stewards of the land and the animals, so we became certified organic in the late 1990s.”

Having the organic certification in hand, Mark started selling raw milk after people began seeking him out to request it. He is now one of the leaders of the raw milk revolution and a renowned expert on raw milk production. Organic Pastures is the largest retail-approved raw and organic dairy in the United States; California allows sales of raw milk in retail outlets. According to Mark, “Raw milk is natural milk and it’s tastier, healthier for digestion, boosts immunity and nutritious. Organic Pastures was the first raw milk dairy in California with certified organic pastureland—you can’t be more natural and essential than that. And what many consumers don’t realize is that raw milk sold in California must meet and exceed the bacteria standards of pasteurized milk without being pasteurized.”

Becoming Animal Welfare Approved was a natural outgrowth of the McAfees’ desire to provide the best products to their customers. “Being organic is great. It guarantees that Californians are getting hormone and antibiotic free dairy products but that doesn’t really tell people what kind of care we give our cows. We want our customers to know the cows in our herd are getting superior care and are able to express

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their natural behaviors. Great animal welfare also means superior and safer products. Safe raw milk comes from grassfed cows and not all raw milk or organic dairies pasture their cows. Having the AWA seal on our products is added assurance that our herd lives on pasture, and it lets people know we really do walk the talk. ”

The McAfees were attracted to Animal Welfare Approved because of its reputation for having the highest standards of all third-party certifiers but also because the program doesn't gain financially from the farms it approves. “Since it's free to farmers, one of the bonuses of the program is that there won't be any question about the integrity of the label due to financial concerns,” Mark commented. “AWA visits the farm once a year, which is more than most certifications, and that gives added confidence that we're maintaining standards. We liked the thought of having regular interaction with the program.”

The addition of Organic Pastures Dairy Company to the Animal Welfare Approved program represents the growing strength of the Animal Welfare Approved label, especially in the western United States. According to Program Director Andrew Gunther, “We are seeing larger family run operations seek us out. They are already established, with a strong consumer following, but realize that to truly be able to offer the best products they can't ignore concerns about farm animal welfare. The AWA label helps them communicate their values and practices to consumers.”

Currently, 28 states allow raw milk sales in some form. Organic Pastures sells at retail outlets throughout California and its products can be ordered for delivery through its website [www.organicpastures.com](http://www.organicpastures.com) (California delivery only). “We've had tremendous response to our raw milk products,” Mark says. “And now our customers from San Diego to San Francisco will know that we value our herd as highly as our products.”

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*Animal Welfare Approved audits and certifies family farms that raise their animals with the highest animal welfare standards, outdoors, on pasture or range. The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) has lauded these standards for two years running as being the most stringent when compared to other third-party certification programs. Visit [www.AnimalWelfareApproved.org](http://www.AnimalWelfareApproved.org) for a searchable database of approved farms and restaurants, shops and markets where AWA farmers' products are sold. Choose the one independent food label that means healthy, safe, environmentally responsible and humanely raised.*