

Grass Fed 101

How to Produce a Quality
Grassfed Product

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- 1981 graduate University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine.
- President American Grass Fed Association.
- American Grass Fed Beef, LLC; wholesale, retail, internet sales.
- Fruitland American Meat, LLC; processing plant Jackson, Missouri.
- Rain Crow Ranch, grass farmer and beef producer.
- Mother of six.

Mark Whisnant

- 30 years agricultural marketing.
- 25 years in the cattle business.
- Markets 200 ac of fresh tomatoes grown each spring in South Carolina.
- Manages 4,000 ac grassfed cattle operation in southern Missouri.
- Grass finishes 400 hd/yr.
- Operates a commercial hunting lodge.

Who among you produces
grass-fed?

How many?

How do you market?

Why Grass Fed?

- Better for Consumer Health
- Better for the Animals
- Better for the Environment
- Better for the Farmer / Rancher

The Pendulum Shift

- 15-20 years ago meat, eggs, dairy products only needed USDA insp and cheap to satisfy most consumers.
- Factory farms were making more and cheaper food as they replaced family farms.
- Early '90 brought a loss of complacency with E.coli and “mad cow”.

Livestock Industry Scrutinized

- Belief what animals fed had no effect on meat, milk and eggs.
- Least cost rations / By-product feedstuff.
- Synthetic hormones.
- Low-level antibiotics.
- Chemicals.
- More health conscious and environmentally aware nation sought alternative food sources.

Alternative to Factory Food

- Meat, milk and eggs from grass based farmers.
- Back to basics.
- New management / marketing techniques.
- High-quality, healthier and safer products.
- Meshing the philosophies of sustainable agriculture, humane care and product pride.
- Grandpa's farm run by a generation of gutsy grandkids who are studious, risk-taking and principled with a passion and vision of a hopeful and more profitable future.

Health Benefits

- Lower in fat and calories
- Higher in CLA and TVA
- Higher in Carontenoids
- Higher in Omega-3 fatty acid
- Higher in Vitamin E
- Safer

Lower in Fat and Calories

- Grass fed beef is 1/3 to 3 times leaner than grain fed beef.
- Lower in fat and calories (1/2 to 1/3 fewer calories than feedlot beef). A 16 oz. grass fed steak has approx. 264 fewer calories than feedlot beef.
- Grass fed beef has the same amount of fat as skinless chicken breast.

Higher in Omega-3 Fatty Acids

- 2-4 times more essential omega-3 fatty acids than feedlot beef.
- Omega-3's help protect humans from cancer, depression, obesity, diabetes, arthritis, allergies, dementia, high blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, heart attack and stroke.
- Omega-3 to Omega-6 in balance which is critical to protect from heart attack and stroke.

High in CLA and TVA

- Conjugated linoleic acid (CLA) and Transvaccenic acid (TVA) are good fats.
- Our bodies turn TVA into CLA
- CLA helps to fight cancer and cardiovascular disease.
- Grass fed meat and dairy products have 2-5 times more CLA than grain raised products.

Higher in Vitamin E

- Grass fed has 3-6 times more Vitamin E.
- Vitamin E is antioxidant, boosts immunity, lowers risk of C-V disease and anti-aging nutrient.
- Grass and forage have 20 times more Vitamin E than corn or soy.
- Grazing animals consume 1,000 IU vitamin E each day.
- More E in feed, more E in the meat, the more E that gets passed on to us. We are what our animals eat.

Higher in Carotenoids

- Grass fed has 4 times more beta-carotene than feedlot beef.
- Difference in color of the fat. Grain is white, grass fed is creamy to yellow.
- Diet rich in beta-carotene lowers risk of cataracts, macular degeneration, and lowers risk of breast cancer in women.

Grass Fed is Safer

- Millions-fold lower in E.coli.
- Grain feeding and acid-resistant E.coli a formula for disaster.
- Carries no risk of BSE (Mad Cow).
Thought to be spread by brain and spinal tissue fed to other ruminants.

What's not in grass fed meat

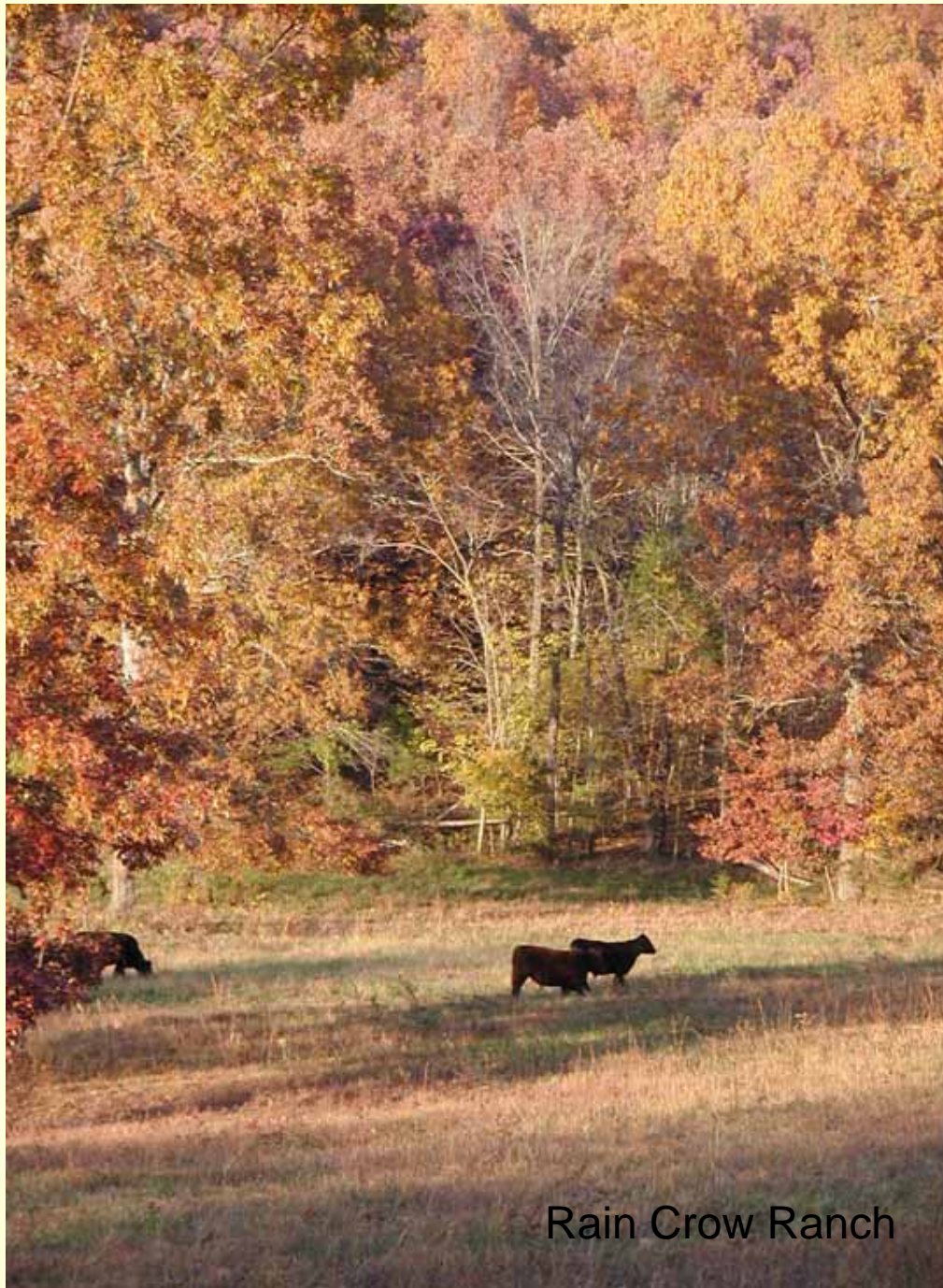
- No artificial hormones.
- No sub-therapeutic antibiotics.
- No animal by-products.
- No garbage “least cost ration”.
- No pesticides.
- No herbicides.

Better for Animals

- Meat and dairy animals allowed to graze in open, stress free pastures the way God intended. They are healthier, live longer and enjoy a higher quality of life.



Rain Crow Ranch, Doniphan, MO



Rain Crow Ranch

New Terms

- Factory farming wants a new image.
- “Managed production” for vertically integrated assembly-line systems.
- “Environmental enhancement” for confinement operations.
- “You wouldn’t let your children run free and be in danger of injury or disease, so why would you allow animals to do so.”



Health & Well-Being of Feedlots

- Factory farms utilize confinement. Crowded, stressful, dirty.
- Chronic acid indigestion.
- Rumenitis.
- Liver abscesses (15-30%).
- Bloat.
- Feedlot polio.
- Development of acid resistant E.Coli.
- Ionophores, synthetic steroids, antibiotics, pesticides needed to manage grain-caused health problems.



Photo by Farm Sanctuary

Better for the Environment

- Rotational grazing returns to soil what animal takes from it.
- Rotational grazing encourages plant species biodiversity.
- Green grazing and animal impact brings back native grasses and plants.
- Pasture reduces topsoil erosion by 93%.
- Rotation decreases pathogens and parasites.
- No artificial fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides.

Environmental Issue

- Grassfed families live on their farms caring for their animals and living in harmony with their environment.
- Will never replace feedlots.
- The consumer who has environmental concerns will push the idea of pasture finishing forward.

Better for Farmers

- Beef producers in conventional arena show \$3/hd.margin over last 20 yrs. (Cattle Fax).
- Corporate consolidation of the beef industry has narrowed marketing options making it increasingly hard to profit.
- Marketing direct to the consumer allows highest returns.

Grassfed Resources

- www.eatwild.com
- ***Pasture Perfect*** by Jo Robinson
- ***Grassfed Basics*** by Jo Robinson
- ***Omnivore's Dilemma*** by Michael Pollan
- American Grassfed Association
- www.americangrassfed.org
- Eat Well Guide
- <http://www.eatwellguide.org/>

Keys to Producing a Quality Grass Fed Product

- Philosophies / education may bring you the consumer the first time but only quality will keep them.
- Consistent high quality finishing pasture.
- Genetics.
- Processing

Quality Chain of Forage

- Must sustain 1.5-2 lb gain / day.
- Many want to overcome the seasonality and supply product year round.
- Argentines grow a forage chain of 70% perennials, 20% winter annuals and 10% summer annuals.
- Rotational grazing allows maximum use of forage.



Rotational Grazing

- Science vs common sense
- Least cost Ration vs Gods way GRASS
- Selective or Continuous Grazing destroys pasture
- Rotational Grazing in its simplest form
- Planning #1
Eliminate Paradigms
Develop best case program

Aerial Photo or Topo Map

- Starting Point
- Decide What are Your Goals
- Set Plan in Motion



Rotational grazing wheat pasture

Electric Fencing

- Equipment
- Paddock design
- Water
- Grounding
- Training cattle
- Divide existing pastures by temporary electric wire to get the hang of it



MIG Resources

- ATTRA
- <http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/rotategr.html>
- The Stockman Grassfarmer
- <http://stockmangrassfarmer.net/>
- *Management Intensive Grazing* by Jim Garrish
- Grazing councils- local pasture walks, ask ag extension
- Grazing schools – intense multi session courses, ask University extension
- Organizations: GLCI, AFGC, NRCS, HRM

- Introduction to Holistic Management
February 5-10, 2007
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Contact: Kirk Gadzia kgadzia@earthlink.net
Join Certified Educator Kirk Gadzia in this hands-on introduction to Holistic Management.
- Holistic Management Grazing Planning
February 9, 2007
Kerrville, Texas
Contact: Peggy Cole pcole@hrm-texas.org
Certified Educator Terry Gompert will teach a workshop on planned grazing.

Genetics of Grass Animals

- Before feedlots: medium size English breeds Angus, Hereford, Shorthorn Devon, Galloways, Red Polls grazed.
- These breeds get too fat in feedlot.
- Feedlot cattlemen cross bred to slower to fatten, larger frame cattle.
- Grass farmers seek out these old breeds because they are great grazers.
- American Livestock Breeds Conservancy [ALBC] supports these heritage breeds.







Grass-fed Genetics

- Good forage-converting genetics important.
- Select for your land.
- Fast-maturing breeds / young age at slaughter.
- Medium frame (short leg).
- Disposition.
- Tenderness.

Processing & Packaging

- Find processor who is willing to meet your special needs and develop a relationship.
- Bar set by our customers who have higher demands.
- Large commercial plants not always geared to custom work for small producer.
- Determine your market – federal insp. required for interstate sales. State insp. for intrastate sales.



Processing

- No inspection required for beef sold prior to slaughter (by head or live wt.).
- All federally inspected plants fall under the USDA's FSIS and must comply with regulations for Pathogen Reduction / Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) system.
- New regulations constantly require implementation to ensure the safety of meat products.
- These regulations include Humane Handling components.

Processing CAN Contribute to Quality Product

- Low stress.
- Dry aging vs wet aging (90%).
- Wait to cool for natural tenderizing enzymes. USDA wants quick cooling.
- Skilled butchers needed to handle lean product presentation.



Packaging

- Venue determines package requirements.
- Vacuum sealed has longer freezer shelf life.
- Private label capabilities.
- Choose someone familiar with the legal issues involved with labels.



Other Considerations

- USDA inspected.
- Organic certification.
- Humane certification.
- Capable of further value-added processing. Summer sausage, bratwurst, jerky, snack sticks, RTE roast beef.





Grass-fed jerky and snack sticks



Grass-fed summer sausage



Grass-fed raw dog food



100% Grass-fed beef dog treats

Grass Fed Standards

- Discerning customers want verification of product.
- USDA proposed standards.
- AGA standards / affidavit.
www.americangrassfed.org

AGA Grassfed Standards

- 99% or higher forage diet
- Pasture or range raised / No confinement
- No antibiotics
- No synthetic hormones

Market Direct

- 73% say they would prefer buying from American producers.
- 27% of consumers would rather buy natural, organic or grass-fed products if available.
- 52% indicate an interest in supporting sustainable farming and family farms.

Factory Farms or Family Farms

- Only 3% of Americans are actively involved in agriculture. Of these less than $\frac{1}{4}$ live on the farm.
- Yet the Family Farm stands as an American icon that most of our population is willing and even passionate to support.
- This segment of the market is willing to pay more for quality products raised on these farms.

Grass-fed and the Beef Market

- Currently grass-fed 1% of US market.
- Anticipated growth over decade 5-10%.
- US wholesale beef market \$770 mil., retail doubles that.
- 1% represents over \$1.4 bil.
- Natural beef retails for 30% premium.
- Grass-fed currently retails for double wholesale factory beef.

Niche Marketing

- Niche market allows premium price.
- Live wt. equivalent \$1.10 to \$1.25 / hd.
- Selling direct often clears \$1000 / hd.
- Premium steak cuts \$20-30 / lb.
- Ground beef wholesale price \$4 / lb.

Margin

- 1000lb @ 1.25 \$1250.
- Kill fee 22.
- Processing (600lb) @ .33 198.
- Packaging (450lb) @ .20 90.
- \$1560.
- \$3.47 /lb cost
- \$5.75 /lb retail
- \$1026 net margin /hd

The Bridge from Producer to Consumer

- Highest returns in direct-to-consumer venues.
- Highest risk.
- Hardest work / new learning curves.
- Relationship marketing.
- Meeting customer wants and needs essential. Customer service most important element of relationship.

Market Opportunities

- Weaned calves / stockers / ranch fats.
- Live direct.
- Local pick up at the farm sales.
- Retail / restaurant / consumer direct.
- Farmers markets.
- Co-op's and alliances.
- Internet listings / directories.
- Internet shopping carts.

Grass Fed Industry

- Today's meat industry is price driven by the factory farms, mega- packers and top 3 major retailers.
- Small producers and processors cannot compete in this price arena. We are not competitive.
- We are comparatively different. What we have to market is not just a product it is that difference (niche).
- From Uruguay to Wal Mart with love.

Our Story

- Starbucks
- Rain Crow Ranch / White Oak Pastures / Yerhlinger Dairy.
- Different stories / Same passion.
- Small family farms are American icon – a heritage to preserve.
- Market “the story”. Let your customer experience the farm.



Sustainability

- To be sustainable it has to be profitable.
- To be profitable small producers need to find a niche. “Go where the giant factory farms fear to tread.”
- Grass-fed is not just a hot product it brings hope to the sustainability of the American Family Farm.

