



November 15, 2002

Wolfe's Neck Farm Foundation Launches Major Expansion of Natural Beef Production

FREEMPORT, ME — Maine-raised USDA Choice beef will now be available in 77 Hannaford supermarkets throughout Maine, New Hampshire and Massachusetts, Wolfe's Neck Farm announced today. The "all natural" product grown by more than 52 Maine farmers to the Freeport farm's specifications represents a major turnaround in an industry that flourished in the state a century ago. Prior to today's announcement, Wolfe's Neck Farm beef was only available in select stores or at the Farm site.



Gov. Angus King praised the program saying, "This new program will have great benefits for everyone involved. Our farmers will have a large market for their products, Maine consumers will have easier, more convenient access to Wolfe Neck's fabulous natural beef, and Hannaford Brothers will expand on their already strong efforts to feature locally raised products." Agricultural Commissioner Bob Spear said of the Wolfe's Neck concept, "This program is critical because it brings farmers together in a common goal and offers them a financially sustainable alternative. This is the best opportunity to come along in animal agriculture for decades."

Wolfe's Neck Farm's manager, Erick Jensen, developed the plan nearly two years ago after learning about Oregon Country Beef, a cooperative of Western ranchers who banded together under one brand name and found relief from commodity price

fluctuations. As with the Oregon model, Wolfe's Neck Farm producers will be able to lock into higher prices for dependable periods of time, potentially yielding an additional \$3,000 over market price per truckload (38-40 head) of cattle. More than one-third of Maine's existing cowherd — 4,000-5,000 head of cattle — will be needed to support this single program. More than 52 farms, mostly in Aroostook County, have joined the program.

In addition, the program will create new demand for feed production, including barley, forage, and potato byproducts. This will involve 24,000 acres of land under pasture and feed production. The program will have major impact on keeping Maine farmland in production and reducing sprawl. Already this year Wolfe's Neck meats, which are now sold in select WholeFoods Markets in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York and New Jersey have brought nearly \$250,000 extra in premium prices to Maine's livestock economy. Jensen said the cattle are raised under strict "all-natural" protocols. "These guidelines dictate the use of no growth hormones, no feed-antibiotics, and no animal byproducts," he said. Hannaford CEO Ron Hodge praised the agreement, saying, "With Wolfe's Neck Farm, our customers get both a high-quality product (USDA inspected and graded Choice or higher), and one that is locally raised. In addition, Wolfe's Neck's strong values and commitment to support the state's economic future mirror our own."

In May 2000, the farm received a \$13,000 grant from the Maine Department of Agriculture to research the potential of the marketing concept. Later that year, Common Good, an arm of the Maine Community Foundation, which helps non profits become more self-sufficient through business-like accompanied by financial and technical



operations, provided a \$35,000 grant support. Common Good continues as a vital partner in the start-up. This year, the Maine Dept. of Agriculture awarded another \$30,000 grant for marketing support, and the Great Bay Foundation also provided a \$25,000 grant.

In July 2001, A&P Super Foodmart agreed to sell Wolfe's Neck Natural Beef in 24 of their New England stores spanning from Martha's Vineyard to West Hartford, Ct, to Springfield, Mass. That same month, Moyer Packing Company of Souderton, Pa., agreed to process the cattle each week at their state-of-the-art meat packing facility. The cattle are shipped from Maine to Pennsylvania for processing and then to stores and restaurants across New England. Wolfe's Neck Farm is a 600-acre natural beef farm dedicated to agricultural renewal and education in Maine. The farm has been raising all-natural beef since the 1950s and runs an education program to teach children about agriculture and marine ecosystems.

The farm was given to the University of Southern Maine in 1986 by Eleanor Houston Smith and in 1997, the University turned its operation over to the nonprofit Wolfe's Neck Farm Foundation. Its facilities, including hiking trails, are open to the public.

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