

Beef FROM PAGE 1B

“It’s been good so far. It takes time to build a customer base,” Luke Gorecki said. “I think it’s growing and taking off and it’s kind of neat. When people eat the beef, they’ll come back and tell you, ‘boy, that’s the best beef I’ve had before.’ That kind of makes you feel good, because it’s a lot of work.”

Special-type of cattle

According to Winders, it’s not by accident that customers would believe what they are ordering is “the best beef” they ever had.

“They (participating farms) are all raising the special cattle — breed a special-type of cattle. That’s a breed that are crossbreed that my partner, Tom, has been working on for more than a decade. And that’s a Jersey that come from Jersey mothers and dairy — famous Jersey dairy cow. Then they have Gelbvieh — which is a Bavarian European beef. Kind of like a serendipitous crossbreed,” Winders said.

“A big part of that comes because of genetics. But then the Jersey mothers are famous for the high butterfat for making cream and cheese and ice cream. These little Jersey cows, they’re very high in outer fat, kind like a Guernsey. But that same genetic ability to incorporate fat into butterfat onto milk, also allows them to put more intramuscular marbling into the meat.”

Winders said that’s key criteria for flavor and tenderness.

Besides the genetics, the cattle are raised in a particular environment with the best nutrition and health care. The environment in which they are raised is supposed to reduce stress on the animals.

“As you increase stress on the animal, you would reduce tenderness,” he said. “You get tough meat from stressed animals.”

Using small locker plants

When the cattle are



Photo by Mike Lamb

Above, Luke Gorecki stands in front of the beef he is raising for BetterFed Beef. He farms with his brother, Adam, near Taunton.

At right, Dave Eis, left, and Zac Eis walk through the facilities of their family’s beef operation near Wabasso.

The Gorecki and Eis families are all producer/owners for BetterFed Beef.



Photo courtesy of BetterFed Beef

ready, they are sent to smaller USDA inspected slaughterhouses.

“It’s all packaged from USDA locker plants, which are also in small towns. And that’s also a good story. Supporting small,

rural, Midwest towns that have USDA locker plants,” Winders said.

One of those locker plants is located in the small southern Minnesota town of Conger, which is in Freeborn County.

“Max (Winders) found

me. I didn’t find them. But there’s not a lot of smaller USDA plants to do what they want to. So they found me. Apparently, they found several of us. I think I’m one of the closer ones,” said Conger Meat Market owner Jeremy Johnson.

“What Max does, BetterFed Beef, is called private label. So we cut it, package it with their label,” he said.

Johnson said his locker plant processes five to six animals once a month for BetterFed Beef.

“It’s a good partnership. He’s got the online shipping business — which we also have that — so we’ve been able to learn from each other a little bit,” he said. “If everything goes to plan, it’ll probably be my largest customer this year.”

Besides BetterFed Beef, Johnson’s plant processes about 20 head of beef a week and 20-30 pigs a week. He anticipates more business being directed toward his plant because the USDA is making a push of less reliance on the large slaughterhouses and create a fair market again. Johnson said it also allows for more accountability of where the animal comes from.

“Every piece of meat we cut is traced back to the animal with the ear tags. Which, if you go to a processing plant where they are doing 1,500 (head) a shift, you know they’re not gonna be able to do that for you. So that’s what Max (Winders) wants,” Johnson said.

In fact, that’s one part of the farm to table process that Winders and Dr. Peters are setting up with BetterFed Beef.

Virtual relationship

“They (customers) can have this virtual relationship with the farm. All of our beef is bar coded,” Winders said. “Say you order from me a chuck roast, a brisket in that box. When I deliver to you, in that box, there’s the farm, the information about the Gorecki family, for example. That they produce those cattle and in that brochure about the Goreckis, there is a QR code and the customer can scan it, go to our website and learn about it. Then they can email the Goreckis directly. And they do. People are doing that.”

“So for the first time, the consumer — say he’s sitting in Portland, Oregon — he gets his beef that night, they are going to grill something and they can see the Gorecki family

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