

wisconsin grass-fed beef cooperative

WISCONSIN
MEADOWS™

100% Grass-fed Beef

Meadow View

Volume 11, Issue 1 • January, 2020

Annual Meeting of the Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Co-op: Saturday, February 8th, 2020

Wintergreen Resort & Conference Center 100 Gasser Road, Wisconsin Dells, WI 53965
(same location as last year) From I-90/94, take Hwy. 12 – exit 92 (by Great Wolf and Kalihari)
and go north on Hwy. 12 to first stoplight, then left (west) on Gasser Road.

Members, please RSVP to Mandy by January 26th at 608-489-2162
or e-mail: more.info@wisconsingrassfed.coop (meeting agenda inside)

Here's the January edition of the Meadow View newsletter!

This 1st issue of the year is mailed to all co-op members so everyone gets the info on the annual meeting. Then you should receive a shorter electronic version by e-mail quarterly.

If you have been getting the quarterly newsletters in the mail (Apr., July, Oct.) you can help save your co-op some money! If you provide us with your e-mail address, we can save on how many printed copies have been mailed, and you will get the benefit of monthly updates from the management team on production and pricing topics, as well as the quarterly newsletter as a PDF. *Please ensure we have your current e-mail address.*

Member participation in a co-op is so important! We welcome your feedback or questions, as well as contributions of articles, recipes or photos, upcoming grazing events or news from your part of the state.

To contact someone at the co-op, our e-mail address is: more.info@wisconsingrassfed.coop or mail to: **Box 269 Viroqua, WI 54665.**

We'll be sure to direct it to the appropriate staff or board member.

General Manager's Message

2019 was an excellent year for the Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative. Despite conventional beef prices dropping nearly 20% from their 2018 highs, we continued to pay our members a 20%+ premium above the conventional market. Our hard work to increase sales and profit has delivered growth in both areas. Volume sales growth, cost management, distribution efficiencies and the addition of a Pastured Pork line will result in another profitable year. We will use that profit to pay down our already low debt and invest in future growth.

The financial stability of our cooperative has brought more and more Wisconsin sustainable family farms that want to market grass-fed beef to our fold. We now stand together as a 200+ strong family farmer-owned cooperative. Despite our improvements over the years, we continue to struggle with consistency of cattle. For first time in recent memory, our average grade of finish on animals shipped for processing has declined instead of improved over the last 6 months. This is very concerning. As a marketing cooperative, we risk the reputation of our brand and our business with every piece of meat that we sell. If the consumer is satisfied with our product, they will come back, and proudly tell their friends about their source of local, grass-fed beef. If the experience is negative, not only will they probably never come back, they will share that negative opinion with others.

Finishing cattle in the upper Midwest is a challenge but we must keep our standards high and never waiver on our commitment to quality. Many excuses can be made for our recent setbacks in average grades of finished cattle. Some new members may lack experience, many of us have short hay supplies or lower quality feed. Despite the challenges, we must make the commitment to each other to *not* ship unfinished animals to the cooperative for the sake of our organization as well as your own farm. Like other challenges, we will work through this together. We will continue to invest in training and education at our annual meeting. Member mentors and board members are available to look at cattle if you are not confident about their finish. If you do not know for sure if your animals are finished, **DO NOT SHIP THEM.** A second opinion could save you a lot of money, and could save your cooperative.

Hope to see you all at GrassWorks and our annual meeting

Rod Ofte – WGBC General Manager

wisconsin grass-fed beef cooperative

Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative – 2020 ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

February 8, 2020 – Wintergreen Resort and Conference Center, Wisconsin Dells, WI

- 9:00 am WGBC Annual Meeting registration – members only
(snacks, coffee and water to be served)
- 9:30 am Call to order – Welcome, member introductions, additions/corrections to the agenda*
- 9:45 am Reading and Approval of 2019 Annual Meeting Minutes
- 10:00 am Treasurer’s Report – Handout; Reading Pay Stubs
- 10:15 am 2019 Business Summary and 2020 Outlook
• Pastured Pork update
- 11:00 AM Break – guests can join at this time
for educational programs and lunch**
- 11:15 am Guest Speaker: Ron Russell – UW-Madison
“Tips to proper finishing beef on grass in Wisconsin”
- Noon Board member nominations and introductions – three seats open
- 12:15 pm Lunch – Move to dining room
- 1:15 pm Reconvene – Election for board of directors (only member farms may vote)
- 1:30 pm What does “Well Finished” Really Look Like??? Hands On
- 1:45 pm WGBC 2025 Review – Great...We are profitable, Now what?
- 2:45 pm Break – networking and visiting with our sponsors
- 3:15 pm Marketing Update : 2020 Website and Social Media – Angie Lindloff
- 3:45 pm Member Awards and Recognition
• Member of the Year and Producer of the Year announced
- 4:00 pm Closing remarks / Questions / Discussion
New board meets, election of officers and photo (new business as needed)
- 4:15 pm Social time with buffet

Ron Russell is back as our featured speaker. He’s a senior lecturer in the Meat Science Dept. at the UW – Madison. A nationally recognized carcass judge, he has coached the collegiate meats judging team and teaches everything from pasture to plate!

* *Submit requests for additions to this agenda to co-op secretary Greg Nowicki 715-257-7146, or make a motion from the floor at the call to order.*

** *The educational program and luncheon is open to guests – invite other graziers/potential members!*

Special room rates available under WGBC block @ \$89/night until Jan 24th, 2020. Call 1-800-648-4765 and press #1 for reservations; say “Wisconsin – Grass-fed Co-op” (rates climb to \$119 after Jan 24th.)



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Wisconsin Grass-fed Beef Cooperative – 2019 Annual Business Meeting Minutes

Held at the Wintergreen Resort, Wisconsin Dells on Sat. Feb. 9, 2019; submitted by Tim Mathison

Introduction – Russ Endres, board president called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m.

President Endres introduced the members of the Board of Directors and the Management Team. There were over 70 co-op members in attendance. The members introduced themselves and gave a brief highlight of their operation.

Approve 2018 Annual Meeting Minutes – Greg Nowicki, Secretary provided the minutes from the 2018 Annual Meeting in a written newsletter sent to all members in January. Motion by Laura Paine to approve the minutes, second by Alan Lang. *MC*

Treasurer's Report – Tim Mathison, the Co-op's accountant gave an overview of the 2018 financials. Co-op had profit of just under \$18,000 in 2018. The sales growth did impact our cash flow at times, so producer pay times were slightly longer than previous years. The breakdown of the pay stubs was shown again for any new members in attendance.

2018 Overview – Rod Ofte – General Manager, presented a summary and highlights of 2018. 2018 had a 36% increase in sales over 2017. 2018 sales were \$2.18 million, which is a new record for the Co-op.

There were several things that led to the record sales. These include regaining Preferred Product status at the Outpost locations, replacing Twisted Oaks in local co-ops, adding a second distributor, gaining a new national trim customer, entry in the Chicago market, and the Pastured Pork trial.

Outlook – Rod Ofte, General Manager, gave a brief outlook of the Co-op going into 2019. The focus will be on improving the quality and stability of our live animal pipeline, expanding our retail ready cut offerings, growing our farm to table business, expansion in the Chicago and Twin Cities' markets, and firmly establishing our Pastured Pork presence with our main Wisconsin customers. He also gave an overview of our brand messaging, co-branding events, sponsorships, and a competitive update. An overview of the management team and their duties was presented so members get to know them, and where to go if they have questions or concerns on a particular topic.

2019 Business Approach – For 2019, the Co-op is looking for a 6% growth in sales to \$2.32 million, with an estimated net profit of \$47,000.

Pastured Pork Program – Rod presented an overview of the Pastured Pork program, including the protocol and pay pricing. A discussion was held with items on the protocol that could be changed. The protocol will be adjusted as

needed as the program develops further, so any member that has ideas should send them to Rod so they can be discussed on future Board of Director calls.

Educational Session – Ron Russell from UW-Madison had a presentation on "Understanding the importance of carcass quality and it's impact on yield".

Board Member Nominations and Election Results – Two seats were open for election. Vice President Jon Lee agreed to run again, and Bob Pesz elected not to run again. Christine Wright and Charlotte Doherty were nominated from the floor. Motion by Judy Lang, second by Rod Ofte to close nominations. *MC*. On the first ballot, Jon was re-elected, and Christine and Charlotte tied. A second vote was held between them, and Charlotte was elected to the second open BOD seat.

WGBC Producer Pane – A panel on "Secrets to Successful Grass-fed Finishing" was held. Members on the panel were Casey Kersteins, Dan Wagner, and Roman Miller. Rod presented them with questions that each answered, and they also took questions from the other members in attendance.

Awards – Pete Prochnow presented the Producer of the Year Award to Casey Kersteins, and the Member of the Year Award to Roman Miller.

Annual Meeting Sponsors – Rod thanked Lorentz Meats, WI Farmers Union, Compeer Financial, Johnson's Sausage Shoppe, and QLF for sponsoring the annual meeting. Larry Parr from QLF presented results for their product WI Meadows Energy Booster Custom from trials that were held on Rod Ofte's and Jon Lee's farm.

Adjournment – The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m. It was followed by happy hour and food prepared by Wintergreen Resort. Members were presented with a variety bag of WI Meadows product in exchange for turning in their completed surveys.

Get Involved in Your Co-op!

There are three seats up for election on the board of directors in 2020. Members interested in running for a three-year term *please notify secretary Greg Nowicki by February 3rd to be included on the printed ballot.* (715-257-7146 or e-mail: eatgrasfed@gmail.com) Nominations (yourself or others) will also be accepted from the floor at the meeting.

Pricing and Production Notes

As we are wrapping up 2019 numbers, it presents a time to review. Keep in mind these production numbers are averages – nonetheless may provide useful benchmarks for comparison and projections.

We look forward to sharing more at the annual meeting, see you there!

Pete Prochnow – Production Manager

PRODUCTION COSTS (LIVESTOCK PURCHASES) SUMMARY 2016 - 2019

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total # Cattle shipped	606	763	1073.5	1074
Fats	585	705	1000.5	1045
Culls	21	45	66	29
Veal/Bull	<6	3	7	12 & 1
Ave Carcass Hanging Weight lbs. (fats)	636.25	643.9	646.88	635.51
Ave Pay Price - fats only (*TA & PB included)	\$2.52	\$2.39	\$2.31	\$2.31
Percent of all fats / Quality Tiers				
Tier 1 Choice	na	17	19	37
Tier 2 (+50 marble score)	na	30	45	36
Tier 3 (-50 marble score)	na	48	32	22
< (less than) Select grade		4	4	6
<i>Final sales figures will come later - but our</i> Costs of purchased cattle (fats)	\$972 k	\$1.086 m	\$1.495 m	\$1.532 m

* TA = Transport Assistance & PB = Patron Bonus (+10 cent / lb after 16th fat sold in 2019)

PORK - Weight & price data not collected for purchases - Total # for 2019 = 108 fat hogs

Buy/Sell Cattle



Registered Aberdeen bull for sale:

75% Aberdeen (Lowline), 25% Angus. Halter trained, easy to sort/load. Proven breeder, 100% in 2019. Born 4-1-14. \$2,500. 608-370-2001 *Dale Gasser*

Upcoming Events

(blue text indicates events the co-op is sponsoring or attending)

Jan. 23-25 – GrassWorks Conference
Chula Vista Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI

Feb. 8, 2020 – WGBC Annual Meeting
Come to the Dells to network with other members, hear about our 2019 successes and challenges and elect the 2020 board members.

Feb. 20-25 Organic Farming Conference
LaCrosse, WI