



Solar Harvest Farm 2007 Spring Newsletter

Solar Harvest Farm
7432 Marsh Road
Waterford, WI 53185
262-662-5278

Fellow Connoisseurs of Food Raised in Sunshine,

March 21, 2007

Here we are again - another newsletter and another season already in motion. As you can see, we really got our 39 cents worth out of Uncle Sam when we stuffed this envelope! We only publish this expensive newsletter once a year so we have to incorporate a year's worth of information in one fell swoop. Absorb it in pieces and you'll get through it! So what's on the docket this year? If I had to name a theme, I'd have to say this year's focus lies with farm methods and farm economics. The farming world is shaking due to many variables. I've included an update on National Animal ID as well as bird flu politics. There's also a great deal of information regarding industrial methods for treating contaminated meat - none of which we use because we are not forced to...yet. The focus on farm economics is in relation to the acceleration of corporate organics into the market. This is a defining period for small farms with the outcome dependent upon the success of this corporate marketing campaign. Big companies are taking advantage of loopholes to create pseudo-organic products. And then of course there's the real meat and potatoes, (sans the potatoes) and that's the new offering of volume discounts for both whole hog or half beef. The folks who take advantage of this will see pricing below that of 2006! The details for this are found directly on the price and schedule page which I'm hoping you will tape to your refrigerator for easy reference. I've also included a perspective on sodium nitrate as a curing agent that I hope you find thought provoking. Things are not always as they seem! So without further adieu, welcome to another season at Solar Harvest Farm, one of the few places on planet earth that utilizes solar energy to produce delicious sustainable food and clean sustainable energy! Come to think of it, is there any other place like this? We're that typical one in 6 billion...and we're not far from your neighborhood!

General Farm Update

Chicken: 2006 was our best season yet. While you'll never hear me say the weather was perfect, as weather goes, it was as good as it's gonna' get. The weights on the chickens were outstanding. This put a smile on our faces as it takes every bit as much time to process a four pounder as it does a six.. We continue to find ways to improve our quality and efficiency. Most of our recent strides have come via improvements in feed handling, bird movement on process day and overall bird comfort. **Turkey:** As you look at the schedule page, you'll notice we are no longer offering pastured turkey. This is what happens when you let us off the hook for one season - we find out where some of our financial hemorrhage was! As a recap, we offered turkey again last year, but interest was slow enough to make me real nervous. By mid May I had to get off the fence and make a decision. While I heard all positive comments on the quality of our turkeys, most folks stated they were just plain out of freezer space. Turkeys had been an offshoot of our chicken enterprise. Many aspects were shared. While I had good records documenting the costs up through brooding, once the turkeys were in the field eating the same feed as the chickens, the ability to itemize costs became blurred. We'll miss their delicious pasture raised meat, but we won't miss their expense! **Eggs:** The Pastured Egg enterprise is now utilizing certified organic feed! We've also switched to a new variety of hens that are not nearly as high strung due to hybridization. While this has cost us in lost production, we don't see any of the aggressiveness that usually leads to feather-picking and ultimately cannibalism. Unlike virtually all the hens that produce the supermarket organic and free-range eggs, our hens are not debeaked. Our hens can get along with each other even though they are all *packing heat* on their beaks because we reacted to the hazards of hybridization by thinking of all variables, not just cost. If animal welfare is an attribute you demand with your egg purchase, we have some openings on the egg schedule! Eggs are priced at \$3.50/dz. Delivery options proved too expensive. Form your own co-op and rotate the pick up days! (See the Form-a-Co-op attachment.)

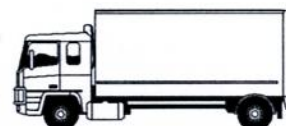
We have to touch a bit more on the weather as it is THE deciding factor in our successes or failures. We all recognize that the weather has become a thing of extremes. This past winter illustrated this to a tee. Historically, the "ugly" period for keeping livestock had always been what we call mud season. Typically this transitional period occurred in November and repeated again in March. In between mud season, we either had firm ground with growing pastures or frozen ground for winter paddocks. The trend says different. Mud season not only lasts longer but also occurs willy nilly during the winter. We cannot turn livestock out onto the main pastures without sacrificing these fields to the mud-gods. Give a good size flock of chickens a week in balmy wet weather and they'll do almost as much damage as a herd of cattle. While we don't like the way it looks any more than you do, we can't move the animals around like we used to in the winter. Chickens have to stay by the garden area and the cattle have to stay in their paddocks. I have spread the cattle out more to help keep things cleaner. I'm also rotating paddocks so I can clean one out as needed. I see no way out of this. A large indoor option for the laying hens would be nice for those wet and sloppy days, but if we put up a building, the economics say we have to stock it to the rafters in order to provide payback. I just want to say that there will be times during the year in which the weather creates conditions that don't coincide with the things we generally brag about. We're doing our best to minimize mud season but see no viable options to eliminate it. Another weather-related change is due to more frequent winter winds. The grassfed beef aren't staying warm enough on their ration of hay. There's just not enough energy in the hay to keep their metabolic fire stoked when the wind is stealing their heat. Windbreaks help, but the wind still whips around and gets them. We're going to have to provide three-sided shelter if we are to minimize risks and keep positive gains going throughout the cold winter periods. All weather extremes aside, the herd remains healthy with no circumstances requiring medicinal intervention.



Grassfed Beef: Our beef cattle pasture rotation held up well for all of the season with exception to a few weeks. I have been placing them back in the woods during the summer slump which has bought more time for the paddocks to recover. Considering the number of cattle we are running (40) on less than 30 acres of pasture, we are doing reasonably well. This does carry risk in that a short drought of only a few weeks will derail the entire process. Weights for last season improved yet we are still not doing as well as we need to. Daily gains by mid summer are minimal. I plan to develop a means of organic fly control. Because these are not dairy cows accustomed to daily handling and because they are moved every day, this will not be as easy to accomplish as it sounds. Even though I am certain I can induce an improvement, I am leery as to whether or not the improvements can compensate for both the material costs and added labor. Geeze, it would be so much simpler to keep them in one place, fill the fly control with the standard mix of diesel fuel and insecticide, then walk away. We won't do that. There's a better way and we'll find it. **Pig-Happy Pork:** Well, we sure had good feedback on the quality of the pork! Problem was that we couldn't get them up to weight in time due to the lower weights that we started with. We really took it on the chin with these lower weights as, just like chicken, the same amount of time is put into the processing effort to achieve in this case, lower weights. Unlike previous years in which we moved the butcher dates out until market weights were achieved, we can no longer do this without really upsetting the apple-cart - both for customers as well as ourselves. With the butcher being farther away, we have to coordinate our trips for efficiency. We also have to make sure you can be here to pick up the meat. This year, we will be starting earlier so as to assure we are up to speed by mid September. That extra butcher day we added last October was very expensive for us as these hours were not factored in. In any case, pork growth is critical to the future of this farm. With bigger hogs this year, the nice big chops will return! Take advantage of the whole hog pricing! If you're happy, please talk us up!

Freezer Truck / Beef - Pork Pickup

I'd like to invest some added time here to talk about the freezer truck and the whole process involving customer pickup dates. The freezer truck is an ole '89 Mack. What ole Mack lacks in form, he makes up in function - and we got 'em for a song! While I had greater confidence in resolving any unknown concerns with the truck itself, the reefer unit is what has created a great deal of anxiety. I would like to share some of this anxiety with you! When I pull away from the butcher in Reeseville, the meat in the back of that truck represents a year's worth of investment. In the case of the beef, it can actually equate to two years.. From noon on Friday until noon on Saturday, I have to first get the truck home safely at which time I then have to make certain the reefer keeps that year's worth of work at zero degrees for the next 24 hours. Even if it were a brand new \$60,000 truck, I'd still have a years worth of work dependent upon one mechanical piece of equipment. When I get in pickles like this, I always like to have a backup plan. In this case, the backup plan would involve duplicating expensive equipment. Furthermore, insurance will cover the costs of the meat if I were to be involved in an accident on the highway, but when I asked for coverage in the event the reefer failed, I was given a quote that was unpalatable. Because we had previously offered both Friday and Saturday customer pickup, that overnight running of the reefer is creating the anxiety - what will we do if it shuts down? Ideally, I should be establishing a Saturday pickup only. I could be at the butcher at sunrise, loadup, return and distribute all of the meat on Saturday. I could do this. The butcher could do this. Coordinating a single date with scores of customers could prove to be irreconcilable(?) So there you have it. I don't want you to "wear" the anxiety. I just want you to try it on, see how it feels, then give it back to me! No sense all of us having our undies in a bundle. Never-the-less, knowing this now, perhaps you can develop a backup plan yourself in the event that your schedule became overloaded on the day you were supposed to pick up your meat - family member, friend, neighbor? This would be really sweet if we could unload that truck on the same day we loaded it - and saving energy by not having to run the reefer overnight would be icing on the cake!



Certified Organic Feed

We had been offering both all-natural and certified organic feed. Last spring, 95% of the orders for both chicken and pork were for certified feed. Once this trend was established, we had no choice but to eliminate the all natural option as we could no longer justify the segregation of feed and shelters. We're sorry for any inconvenience this created. The folks who have been on the egg schedule read the write-up I put together regarding the benefits of organic feed so I will not duplicate this here. Anyone who would like to receive this should let me know. Our organic feed is certified organic by M.O.S.A. I will happily disclose invoices to anyone who has an interest or would simply like the peace-of-mind.

Future Plans

We are growing as fast as we can personally build without going too deep into debt doing so. Unlike many financial statements, "interest" has been one of our lowest expenses. This may change as we may borrow more than we've previously done. In some cases it is no longer prudent to wait to earn the money. We're long overdue for a machine shed. When I see water coming from a bearing when it's greased, I know that piece of equipment is headed for a breakdown. We also have no shop space where we can grind and weld without fear of burning the barn down. We've put it off too long. We're going to have to grin and bear it. In terms of the future with livestock, the pigs represent our most viable growth option without the expense of obtaining additional land, which if we did, would have to be rented as land prices in this area are now only good for growing houses and strip malls. Adding more beef will be very risky. One 2" rain can stop our rotation just as quickly as a 2 week drought. Chickens - well, that's going to be a tough one for the long haul. Richie will be a senior this year and Sheri's right on his heels. Sarah is already stepping in to help. We still have several years before we have to reinvent the labor aspects of this enterprise but we know it's coming. Who knows - if agribusiness keep pushing things in their present direction, no meat will be considered "safe" without first being subjected to agribusiness decontamination potions sanctioned by their lackeys in government. (You'll find more on this on another page.) Meanwhile, we'll sally forth until that plain sedan with the state plates pulls down our drive and informs us that we are a risk to society.



Agriculture - Peopleculture

The theme of last year's newsletter was focused on essential amino acids and fatty acids. Historically, much of what we've communicated in all our previous newsletters has focused on nutrition as a sort of preventative medicine. As the years pass, I feel myself being pulled away from this mantra as it seems the message has become a bit trite. To some degree this is because I know I'm preaching to the choir. I've met enough of you folks to realize that you are fully in tune with these issues. So why am I bringing this up again then? Because this is an uphill battle for all of us. Even though many of us go out of our way to eat both sensibly and with a conscience, the perils associated with bad fats, inadequate amino acids and excessive sugar consumption are ubiquitous in our lives so as to be, in a practical sense, inescapable. It is painful to witness the people you care about consuming food and drink that you know will eventually lead to health problems. There is one word in that last sentence that plays the spoiler. That word is: *eventually*. Twinkies for example, represent the epitome of bad nutrition, but we'll still eat one or two every now and then because we know we're not going to drop dead tomorrow from doing it. We're all living proof that, aside from pathogen and viral contamination, the human body rarely reveals its shortcomings quick enough, such that we can see the smoking gun. I think we humans are a very arrogant and selfish species. Not in the context of arrogance and selfishness towards others, but towards the symbiotic life forms in our own bodies that literally metabolize us into the next day. Think about it...we've got this wonderful, state-of-the-art 600 ka-zillion gigabyte processor chugging away in our cranium that is certainly capable of even rudimentary knowledge of the cellular metabolism occurring in the rest of the body. So as that wonderful hi-tech brain issues a command to the eyes to scan the supermarket shelves for nourishment, the billions of cells and tens of billions of interdependent microorganisms have already handed that brain the grocery list of all essential amino acids, essential fatty acids and appropriate balance of carbs and lipids. And what does that brain do...the brain flips them all off in favor of sugary foods and convenience! So even though we have billions of independent yet interdependent individual life forms that carry-out the essential day to day process of sucking in glucose, squirting out hormones, building up fresh proteins and breaking down stale ones, the nemesis of our egotistical and selfish brain is the desire for convenience and the chemical addiction to the taste and reaction of sugar.

I'll get off this soapbox with this reminder: Livestock are eating better than people. **Farmers are providing far greater nutritional completeness to animals than human-beings do for themselves.** People certainly have all the options before them to eat meals as nutritionally complete as livestock, but people choose not to, again, because of our genuine addiction to sugar and the convenience of processed foods. Granted, livestock do eat pretty much the same meal every day. This certainly makes it easier for "Chef Al Falfa" to provide all the essential ingredients in one recipe. Another thing people might point out is that Chef Al Falfa expects to reap financial rewards for providing this complete nutrition. Yesirree, that is correct, but how are those rewards obtained? The rewards are obtained by raising an animal that performs to its potential while not becoming sick or dying prematurely. Now who among us doesn't aspire to these qualities?!

You do in fact have your own herd of livestock inside you. You've got billions of mouths to feed in your cellular and microbial herd. You are your own farmer! Your livestock don't moo, oink, gobble or go cock-a-doodle-doo. But they're eatin' and they're forced to eat whatever you're shovelin'! So if you're not shovelin' the full compliment of amino and fatty acids as can only be obtained from pastured proteins or seafood, your herd of livestock are slowly but surely...sick and dying. So why are you just sitting there when you know this? Just what kind of farmer are you anyway?! Feed those guys some pastured proteins!!!! Remember, this isn't a marketing gimmick. This is the diet that has come naturally to we humans for all but the last 60 years or so when livestock were removed from pastures and put in confinements. You know, I'm envious. I've got to do quite a bit of work to feed the livestock on this farm. All you have to do is walk to the kitchen and eat delicious pastured meat and eggs - and your livestock are fed - VERY well fed! People-culture...Be your own farmer. Feed the livestock inside you the diet that is indeed ESSENTIAL to THEIR physiology so that they may excel at their principle task of building and rebuilding YOU.

Farm Economics - Do You Believe In Magic?

People have different opinions about the status of this country's food production methods. Some are proponents of the so-called good ole days whereas others say get on the barge and get large. What follows is a comparison of the diverse farms of the past to the specialized farms of today. I have included this because I think it provides a necessary perspective for folks who are in search of quality food at cheap prices. These cheap prices have become the benchmark to measure all others. More than a few have expressed a concern that we are fleecing them when charging the prices that we do. Because the industrial product is available so cheap, people understandably feel that anything priced appreciably higher must be all profit. Yet there are no hidden costs that our small farm imposes on society. We don't pollute the environment. We don't damage the roads with heavy trucking. Our product doesn't antagonize your health. We use much less water, oil and coal. It has become clear to me that our society has backed itself into a corner. The windfall of cheap energy and hybridization has created a jaded perspective of agriculture. These two foundational footings are interdependent upon each other. Hybrids perform poorly outside confinements and confinements can't provide cheap food without cheap energy. If we look only from the farm gate, today's industrial farms are awe-inspiring models of efficiency demonstrating material handling and livestock housing efficiencies that are exponentially better than *the good ole days*. Yet this highly efficient industrial farm that we see and measure is only the product of numerous but less apparent attributes, all of which inflict incredible inefficiencies and costs onto society. This is the charade that society continues to play. We pretend we are getting a good deal at the supermarket even when the health, environmental and cultural costs are knocking on our own doors. This alleged success of our present cheap food price structure is based on this magical illusion of efficiency. So about that corner we're backed into...take a peek at these comparisons. How long can family farms hold on while the majority in society continue to believe that the agribusiness magician is really pulling a rabbit out of his hat?



The Good Ole Days - Fast Forwarded to Today

Scenario: 1954 typical midwest farm consisting of: 190 acres; 20 sows farrow-to-finish; 12 milk cows.

If this farm were to be recreated today achieving modern day yields while subjected to modern day expenditures and market prices, the net income for this farm would be \$16,430/year. If this farm evolved to a size typical in the '70's, (260 acres; 23 sows farrow-to-finish; 25 dairy cows) it's net income based on modern day expenditures and market prices would be \$22,935/year.

source: Agri-view August 24, 2006 - University of Minnesota - Mankato study.



What Does it Take To Farm Conventionally Today?

If a farm couple, (two wage earners working full time plus) were to earn a **combined** net income of \$64,000, (\$32,000 each) to meet typical family living expenses*, they would need to develop their farm to achieve any one of the following scenarios:

Row crop - 50/50 corn/soybean rotation: 1864 acres

Hogs - Farrow to Finish: 4417 Hogs

Hogs - Contract Finish: 16338 pigs (Net \$3.92/pig)

Cattle - Beef Feeder: 679 calves (Net \$94/beeve)

Row crop - Corn only: 2500 acres

Hogs - Feeder Pigs: 6502 pigs (Net \$9.84 per pig)

Cattle - Dairy: 121 Cows (Net \$529/cow)

Cattle - Cow/Calf: 815 Cows (Net \$79/calf)



source: Agri-view August 17, 2006 - University of Minnesota - Mankato study.

*Farming, as well as any other self-employed occupation must obtain fringe benefits via out-of-pocket expenses. A typical middle income employee working for a company that provides a fringe benefits package is actually earning total compensation equal to 1.5 times their gross earnings. This note has been interjected for those who may have never recognized the dollar value of their fringe benefits and may therefore conclude that \$64K/year for two self-employed adults is adequate or even excessive. To state this another way, when the comparable cost of the fringe benefits typically obtained by employees is subtracted from the \$64,000 figure used in this study, the couple's wages amounted to \$21,333 each. Considering the hours typical of operating a farm, both were likely working a minimum of 60 hours a week. Assuming these hours, their earnings equate to \$6.84/hour.

This is a pivotal period for both conventional and sustainable agriculture. Demand for ethanol is systemically changing markets. \$4 corn can't be fed to hog farms that operate on \$9 per head margins. Conventional corn growers won't convert to organic unless the organic price rises proportion to the ethanol impact. Coinciding with this is the all-out assault by corporate organics with their diluted pseudo-organic loopholes, (ref: www.cornucopia.org). Much change has occurred in a very short period of time. Alternative energy now conjures images of ethanol plants and manure digesters where it previously depicted solar, wind, conservation and efficiency. And how is it that we don't recognize that when manure is diverted to produce methane, the dependency on petro-chemical fertilization is perpetuated? And if consumers fall head-over-heels for half-price "organic" eggs, meat and milk sold at Wal-Mart while having been produced in grassless confinements, will the truly pastured producers survive? And what did the consumer receive for this cheaper but still premium price? If: [net per animal x qty of animals = farm income], how can a small farm remain small without violating it's core pledge to organic consumers? If organic consumers won't pay for the cost of smallness, how can the small farm provide what the consumer demands? We have a circular argument with an impossible outcome! Ladies and Gentlemen, please fasten your seatbelts. It looks like we'll be experiencing some turbulence. We're going to hang on, but we're not causing this turbulence. The fate of the small farm lies with the consumer's desire or lack of desire to seek the truth - a truth that can be verified with your visit to our farm yet must be gleaned from the product packaging at the big-box store. Remember the old "To Tell the Truth" show? Will the REAL pastured-based farmer please stand up!

Steve, Michelle, Richie, Sheri & Sarah
We are Solar Harvest Farm - On Pasture!



"Producing Sustainable Organic Energy from Local Sources to Provide Sustainable Organic Nourishment for Local People"



Ruminations



They say that ethanol will gobble up all the corn so there won't be any left for people to eat. Question: Should people be eatin' soooo much corn? If it would take too much of our acreage to biofuel power today's 16 mpg SUV's, wouldn't it take only a third of that to biofuel power 48 mpg vehicles? Biofuels made from diverse mixtures of **perennial** prairie plants would yield 50% more energy than corn ethanol. (But corporate seeds sales will fall.) Corn processors sell corn to Mexico at below COP, (NAFTA) undercutting Mexican farmers who in turn immigrate to US to work for poverty wages. Society now enforces a corporation's patented right to a living organism that can be dispersed in the wild. Trespass w/compensation due the corporation. Energy conservation, efficiency and renewables are not virtues - They represent sound energy policy requiring only an *attitude* change and an *oil* change. Everything we need to resolve our immediate energy and environmental problem is available at the local car dealer, home center and pastured farm.

In the News...



NAIS Update: National Animal ID has changed strategy. Resistance to this program has been strong enough for the Feds to pull the word "mandatory" from their itinerary. This cosmetic change has created the effect of squelching the natives while NAIS proponents retrench. The new strategy is focused on the rights of individual states to administer their own programs without appearing as a federal mandate. While the Feds have removed the word mandatory, the state of Wisconsin continues to require mandatory premises registration for all locations that keep livestock - both pleasure and professional. Even though the new Federal guidelines no longer contain mandatory verbiage, their goals continue to project full compliance. Compliance is expected to be accomplished by the insertion of chokepoints into agricultural commerce. If an individual wishes to participate in this commerce, the prerequisite will be to comply. As a brief recap to concerns communicated in last season's newsletter, the USDA and Wisconsin DATCP state that their primary motivations in implementing this system are in relation to mitigating the spread of disease. As long as these government agencies continue to promote CAFO's and high speed slaughter while at the same time actively working to undermine COOL, (Country Of Origin Labeling) as well as prohibiting 100% testing for BSE, their motives are blatantly disingenuous. Recognizing that NAIS was literally conceived and implemented by the corporations that will reap a financial windfall upon its implementation, one needs little convincing to see the true intentions of this tremendously misguided and over-reaching government intervention into commerce and private lives.

Bird Flu: Isolated occurrences continue to surface. The first question we must ask is "in what environment were these sick birds raised"? In every case, the husbandry has included some variation involving overcrowding, confinement, high fecal concentrations or other unnatural conditions. There is no evidence demonstrating that livestock with a healthy immune system can succumb to this disease if contact is made in the wild. We do know that hundreds of thousands of birds in close confinement can rapidly fall victim to one outbreak. The fear-mongering induced by government is in response to their capitulation to the large processors who control the disease-vulnerable, centralized, CAFO-method of agriculture by-way-of processing contract as well as the pharmaceutical companies peddling vaccines, (that cannot be effective against variable and uncertain mutations).

The following news items were not gleaned from animal-rights websites or alarmist/extremists sources. These news items were taken from agricultural trade publications within the past year. These items were presented to agri-professionals, not in a manner suggesting concern, but rather, in a manner that told the agri-professional - *here - look what the industry is doing to prevent pathogens from harming our mutual customers.*

Enhanced Meat: A practice that has been in use for quite some time, processors are now implementing new enhancement solutions. Enhancement is the procedure in which processors utilize needles to inject solutions deep into the meat to make it taste better and provide longer shelf life. Solutions such as sodium lactate and sodium diacetate are the "enhancers". At issue is not just the implications of another substance added to food but also the cost this liquid solution imposes upon the consumer as these solutions are injected to add up to 15% to the package weight. Of even greater concern lies with the industrial process in which this is conducted. Over the course of one day's production, the same needles penetrate the meat from literally thousands of different animals - animals that potentially came from different regions of the country or even from outside the U.S. Given the fact that carcasses processed on these high volume, high speed slaughter facilities are more prone to pathogen contamination, (as compared to low speed, low volume), and the fact that these pathogens are found almost exclusively on the exterior surfaces of the carcass, the enhancing process, because of needle injection utilizing the same needles as well as recaptured excess solution, introduces these pathogens deep into the meat where it is less likely to be killed during cooking - especially for those who prefer their meat rare.

MAP: Modified Atmosphere Packaging. As cuts of meat are packaged for retail, they are sealed in an atmosphere of .4% carbon monoxide, 30% carbon dioxide and 69.6% nitrogen. In the presence of these gases, the meat will retain its red color much longer. Processors and retailers recognize that red meat sells. Brown meat does not. Color is not only eye appealing, but was previously indicative of the meat's age. By exposing the meat to these gases, the retailer is able to present the same cut longer thereby increasing sales. Meanwhile, the consumer's decision to purchase the cut of meat was based on a visual inspection that told them the cut was fresh, (red) when in fact the cut was older. The implications of MAP are similar to those of irradiation in that old meat can be presented to the customer as "fresh". Retailers are not required to label meats as being processed with MAP.

Bacteriophages: Solutions comprised of a mixture of as many as six bacteria-destroying viruses that are literally sprayed onto meat to destroy (eat) pathogens such as listeriosis and salmonella. These viral solutions are deemed safe to eat by USDA.

Acceptable Contamination: As reported on December 8, 2006 in the Wisconsin State Farmer, workers at a Swift beef packing plant in Nebraska inadvertently sprayed wastewater on 493 carcasses. Carcasses are washed down as they leave the kill floor. By accident, the material collected in the drains of the kill floor was sprayed onto these 493 carcasses, (representing 355,000 lbs of beef by my calculation). As reported, the USDA spokesman stated that the meat would normally be deemed "contaminated", but in this situation Swift officials convinced government inspectors they could make the beef "safe and wholesome again" through "approved treatment and microbial testing". Swift proceeded to cut off the external surfaces that came into contact with the wastewater and treated the beef before

testing it for e-coli, salmonella and other bacteria. The USDA said it was indeed wastewater sprayed on the carcass as a result of a defective backflow mechanism, - but USDA inspectors oversaw the treatment of meat and the sample testing and were convinced it was safe for people to eat. (These plants provide beef to upscale butcher shops, restaurants and supermarkets.)

Is it necessary to indulge in the gory details regarding the material that collects in kill floor drains in order to fully understand the implications of this incident? A plant such as this is in production 20 hours per day, slaughtering more than 5000 cattle a day over these floor drains. An army of workers must eviscerate these carcasses as they are in constant motion on an overhead conveyor. The contents in these floor drains, be it the direct result of slaughter or anything tracked in on workers boots, represents the very nemesis of food safety - the core reason for the existence of government oversight. This was an Erin Brokovich moment waiting to be seized, for it is doubtful that any USDA or plant official would knowingly eat this or allow it fed to their own family, for the involuntary gag reflex would not allow it. It is better to feed this "decontaminated" meat to those who are unaware yet put their trust in the USDA stamp of approval - the very pretext in which the industrial meat processing system is built upon. Both Swift and USDA officials are fully aware that their process grinds and intermixes the meat from thousands of animals when producing ground beef. They also knew that these 355,000 lbs of meat would be interjected into this process, thereby effectively dispersing this "decontaminated" meat exponentially. To know that this was allowed with the full blessing of plant and government officials, one can only imagine what must occur when these officials are not notified of a problem.

There is an old axiom that suggests never to disparage a competitor's product. I do understand the implications of this principle in that I too am turned off by businesses that focus on the negatives of other's rather than accentuating their own positive attributes. Herein lies the conflict. To better illustrate this conflict, I will list some positive attributes that serve as icons and images to those who seek our products: *Green pastures; Sunshine; Fresh air; Red barns; Smallness; Diversity; Natural, Farm fresh..* Now I will ask you to recall much of the advertising that is projected at you by the large food processors and retailers. You have likely seen the cows standing in the green pastures aside red barns. You have seen the words "farm fresh" on many packages. You have seen the image of beautiful red barns depicted with a multitude of products. You have seen hens scratching about a quaint barnyard. You have heard the commercials in which the rooster crows as he announces the sunrise amidst the sounds of meadowlarks and a gentle breeze. All of these images represent the very essence of our small pasture-based farm yet are in fact almost totally if not completely non-existent within conventional agriculture. Not only are these businesses not actually utilizing the images in which they advertise to you and I, the policies they promote are contemptuous to those who still advocate such attributes, disparagingly referring to them as the "Red Barn Club" or other condescending aphorisms depicting backwardness. When the day arrives in which a dozen conventional eggs are sold depicting a smelly, million bird confinement building, I will refrain from disparaging their product. Meanwhile, as they have my farm on their package, I have no way to differentiate my product from theirs without revealing their great deception. The message to large agribusiness is simple: If red barns, green pastures and animals on pasture are considered to be an inefficient, backward relic of the the past, then kindly remove these images from your commercials, magazine ads and product packaging.

It should be noted that the concerns associated with pasture-based farming delve much deeper than only those of nutrition and food purity. By allowing animals to exist in their natural physiological environment, harvesting all of their own summer feed, (as in the case of grassfed beef) or a portion of their own feed, (as with pastured poultry), significantly less diesel fuel is required to feed the livestock. Because livestock are not confined in buildings that require electrical energy to heat, cool and ventilate as well as extreme amounts of water to flush excrement, the demand for coal-based electricity is also significantly reduced. Furthermore, by raising and marketing within the same small geographic area, the 1500 miles that conventional food products travel is reduced to the difference between your local town and ours thereby saving even more diesel fuel. Whereas nutrition and food purity are assets by which we, as individuals, benefit directly, these other assets provide their benefits to all of us in society indirectly through improvements in society's quality of life. Considering the political and environmental ramifications associated with oil and coal, these aspects of pasture-based farming are not only substantial, but collectively transcend all other benefits that pasture-based farming provides to humanity. How lucky we are to glean these benefits from foods that taste as wonderful as the environment in which they were raised!

Over the millennia, we humans have developed sensors that send signals warning us of bodily harm if we eat putrid food. Our sensors of sight and smell can assess this concern in seconds. Our gag-reflex acts as a final gate-keeper when the eyes and nose are rushed on the job. Even more sophisticated are we, that we can recall olfactory files in our memory, literally inducing the gag reflex based on smell memory alone. It is these very survival mechanisms that the industrial processes are intent on fooling. The eye sees red meat thus sending a signal to the brain that the meat must be fresh? The meat does not smell, therefore it must not be inhabited by the pathogens that literally create these putrid smells? The acceptable taste of the meat is created naturally rather than by chemical enhancement? To those who understand industrial agriculture, all of these formerly primal instincts are now superseded by a question mark. The industrial meat engineers have succeeded in tricking our primal sensors into accepting foods that the body would have previously rejected as a threat to it's survival. But millions of people do in fact eat these inconspicuous materials with their food yet do not fall immediately ill. This represents the very essence of success as decreed within the paradigm of government food safety protocols. The defining criteria that differentiates the centralized monolithic industrial food safety methods from the decentralized and diverse small farm methods is this: Industry and government focuses on *cure* after pathogen contamination. Our small farm and our processors focus on *preventing* pathogen contamination. While government has proven that human-beings can consume dead-pathogens with their meat, we instead have created an environment eliminating the contamination potential. This is to day that if we avoid contaminating the meat, we don't need to shower the meat with concoctions intended for decontamination. The eating experience is exquisite when one knows how their food was produced! In this case, ignorance is anything but bliss.