



Belties brand Sherwood Acres Beef

By BILL HOLLERAN, *Kentucky Agricultural News*

Belted Galloways or “Belties” have never been a major cattle breed in Kentucky, but Jon Bednarski of Sherwood Acres is using them and their unmistakable coloration to brand his product and his beef business in Oldham County.

Bednarski sells his Belted Galloway freezer beef and retail beef cuts at farmers’ markets and high-end restaurants in the Louisville area. He promotes his beef as homegrown, healthy and flavorful lean beef. His cattle are raised naturally with no hormones or antibiotics and are grown primarily on grass pastures supplemented with corn- and soybean-based commodity feed.

Bednarski was raised in Vermont. His experience with cattle was limited to his uncle’s dairy business growing up. He saw Belted Galloways in the New England area growing up as a kid and wanted to raise something different. “I was very interested in the breed and trying to develop a niche beef operation,” he said. “Being a new farmer, I wanted to get involved with a breed where I thought I could make a difference.” His passion for agriculture has earned him not only a seat on the Belted Galloway Society’s marketing committee but also an award for Oldham County home-based business of the year. “I’m working to promote the breed on a local level and help consumers find locally produced beef that’s naturally raised with good animal husbandry practices,” he said.

Benarski participated in the University of Kentucky’s Master Cattleman program and credits the university, KCA’s Alison Smith, and KDA’s Warren Beeler and Roger Snell as being very helpful to providing programs and services that benefit cattle farmers. Bednarski also participated in various county and state grant programs since he began his operation, and he has always been willing to share his knowledge with other producers. “I have been on the local Master Cattleman’s committee to increase awareness about good cattle management practices, and we have hosted several field days here on the farm,” he said. “I’m always humbled when veteran cattle producers show up at a field day on my farm.”

Bednarski’s goal is to create a customer base of around 800 people. “For a lot of people our product is a treat. We focus on quality and want to attract repeat business, and so far demand exceeds supply. People want something different, and they want to know where their food comes from, what we are feeding these animals and how they are raised. We are also currently working with a group to develop an animal welfare certification,” said Bednarski. It’s important because Bednarski believes docile animals that have been treated properly produce better carcasses.

Bednarski offers several insights to others hoping to engage in agriculture. “You really need to be willing to be hands-on and be willing to sacrifice your time. Start-up farmers like me need to be willing to educate themselves. Look at the possibilities, do the work, and do your research. Get to know the people out there that are willing to help you. The universities, cooperative extension service, and Kentucky Department of Agriculture have all been extremely helpful.”

For more information on Sherwood Acres, visit its Web site at www.sherwoodacresbeef.com.