



Sirloin Tips



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Natural beef project in high gear

Wolfe's Neck Natural Beef has been a classic start-up. Despite the most careful analysis and projection of what would happen, farm director Erick Jensen found himself dealing with unexpected problems on an almost daily basis. But after a year, the project is going well and while not yet profitable, Jensen's figures show it is on the verge.

One of the problems has been success. Hannaford, which just began selling Wolfe's Neck beef this fall, is selling much more than it expected and has asked for more meat. However, because it was using only a few cuts, this left us in the predicament of finding additional markets for the rest of the meat that would come from processing more cows. Jensen has worked with Hannaford to get them to take more cuts and sales manager David Ordway has been finding markets for the remaining meat.

Sales are particularly brisk in areas of the state where people know about Wolfe's Neck and they are clearly buying "Maine farmers" as well as natural beef. One of the greatest surprises of the Hannaford expansion has been the popularity of our hamburger. Although more expensive than other hamburger, it has such a superior taste, customers have been buying it out on a regular basis and asking for more.

Increased demand has also meant that we have been using all the cattle available in Maine and now need to help Maine farmers grow more. Existing members of the program have already begun to increase their herds and Jensen is developing special producer education programs to help new farmers join.

As we wait for this increased production to come on line, Jensen has been scouring

the Northeast to find cattle that have been raised to our protocols (no growth hormones, no feed antibiotics, etc.) and standards. But this is only a holding strategy until Maine farmers can increase their herds to meet the new demand.

We have also switched to a major national distributor who is supplying leads for sales manager Ordway to follow up. Ordway finds that Wolfe's Neck is not only competing in a national market but has a product that can compete in this area. He recently received a call from an agent who supplies top-of-the-line gourmet shops who had been impressed by the quality of our meat. Unlike local shoppers, he was totally uninterested in supporting Maine farmers and cared only about taste.

But Ordway's mission is to sell what we have and that means cuts other than sirloins, a mission that has become more difficult in a world where fewer people make pot roasts and the dishes that were so popular a generation ago.

Despite the complexities and the problems, the project has already achieved some of its goals, most notably becoming a model for how Maine agriculture can be revitalized by finding a premium market where Maine farmers can receive a higher price for their product that allows them to farm profitably and stay on the land. The goal of overall profitability is close.

With that profitability will come further expansion of the program, greater use of Maine farmland, and even some return to Wolfe's Neck Farm to put into maintaining our property here and implementing new programs.

What's New: From Christmas trees to wildlife blinds

There is always something new happening at the farm. Here's the latest update:

George Lawrence of Mill Stream Associates on Pleasant Hill Road is donating 100 Christmas trees to be sold for the benefit of the farm. We hope to have them cut and ready for our Holiday Bazaar on December 7.

Board member Jay Espy is arranging a meeting of all the non-profit farms in Maine so they can discuss what each is doing to make sure they are not needlessly overlapping and are cooperating to the maximum extent. The farms range from the newly acquired Crystal Spring next door in Brunswick to Morris Farm in Wiscasset and Aldemere in Rockport. The granddaddy of the non-profit farm is Laudholm in Wells.

Americorps member Sarah Rogers is beginning research on developing animal blinds for the farm. She will be interviewing experts to discuss the blinds' feasibility and design. The goal is to have blinds from which visitors can view and photograph wildlife, both birds and animals, at various sites across the farm. She will also be learning about how we can enhance the environment to attract the animals people want to see.

Expanding adult programs is one of the tasks Kathy Bither has taken on. These can include lectures and demonstrations on gardening techniques, from green manure crops to composting. But the range is limitless so if you have ideas or if there are things you would particularly like to learn about, tell Kathy about them at kbither@bates.edu.

The range run Thanksgiving turkeys have all been spoken for, as usual. So now, it's time to think about that Christmas roast. If you want to reserve a rib roast for the holiday, e-mail your order to Dawn Downs at farmaine@wolfesneckfarm.org.

Harvest Dance:

Thanks for the memories

Thanks to all who supported our 6th annual Harvest Dance. It was a great night and a great success. We enjoyed a delicious dinner catered by Uncle Billy's Barbecue (using our own natural beef), and danced late into the night to the music of the Midnight Ridge Band.

As always, our volunteers and sponsors helped make this fundraiser a successful event. Our appreciation and great thanks go to Sandy & Earl Betts, Mo & Henry Jackson, Michelle Maves, Tracy McMillan, Suzanne Ingram,

Jennie & Jim Gwilym, Liz Brown, Amy & Matt Cartmel, Jennifer & Andy Trowbridge, The Corsican Restaurant, B&M Baked Beans, the Harraseeket Inn, LL Bean, Bath Savings Bank, Green Mountain Coffee and Barton Mortgage Corporation.

The Night Tree has returned

The Education Department is once again putting on its popular reading and decorating of The Night Tree based on the children's book by Eve Bunting. There will be four sessions, two on Dec. 7 and two on Dec. 14 to accommodate the expected demand. Reservations must be made in advance.

There is a charge of \$5 per child and children must be accompanied by an adult. There is no charge for adults or children under age two.

The two-hour program consists of: A reading, over hot cocoa and cookies, of the Night Tree story. Making birdseed/pine cone ornaments, cranberry garlands and apple rings. A hike into the woods to decorate a tree for wildlife and sing holiday songs around a campfire.

The sessions are on Dec. 7 from 2 to 4 p.m. and 4 to 6 p.m., and on Dec 14 at the same hours. If the weather is too bad, there will be sessions on Dec. 21. The Dec. 7 session overlaps with the farm's first Holiday Bazaar which runs from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For further information or to make a reservation call the education office at 865-4363.

Keep updated by e-mail

If you would like to receive calendars and updates on events and other special notices give us your e-mail address. We won't inundate you with stuff you don't want but we will keep you informed.

To use this service, ask Dawn to put you on the e-mail list at farmaine@wolfesneckfarm.org. It's as simple as that.

Wolfe's Neck Farm Holiday Gift Show

Saturday, December 7

10-5 PM

Featuring:

- * Our Natural Beef gift packages
- * Natural soaps, lotions, and baby products
- * Locally made preserves, scone mixes, and dog biscuits
- * Baked goods by our Friends of the Farm members
- * Wreaths and trees available for sale
- * Many new products in our farm store

There will also be a centerpiece/wreath making class held at 11:00 in the Haze Hut

Give your friends something special this year:
A holiday gift package from Wolfe's Neck Farm

All of our meats are great tasting and all of the animals are grazed on pesticide-free fields by small farmers. They use no growth hormones and no antibiotics or animal byproducts in the feed.

When you purchase this meat, you support the revitalization of agriculture in Maine, allowing farmers to stay on the land, thus decreasing the likelihood of their selling their farmland.

Beef Tenderloin Gift Package

The best steak there is, well-marbled and tender. This is for that special person who appreciates the unusual and exquisite.

8 tenderloin steaks in four packages of two (some can be stored). Plus steak rub.

\$89.95 plus \$12 shipping (in New England).

Holiday Dinner for Two

The Delmonico is our customers' favorite. The ultimate for grilling, succulent when seared on the outside and rare in the middle.

Gift package includes two Delmonico steaks, one chocolate rose from Wilbur's of Maine, and a dinner candle.

\$34.95 plus \$12 shipping (in New England).

Breakfast Package

No nitrates in this bacon and the maple syrup and pancake mix are from Maine. This is for that special holiday breakfast or a special treat on a cold winter's day.

One package of bacon, one package of breakfast sausage, one package of pancake mix, one pint of maple syrup and 2 coffee mugs with the Wolfe's Neck logo.

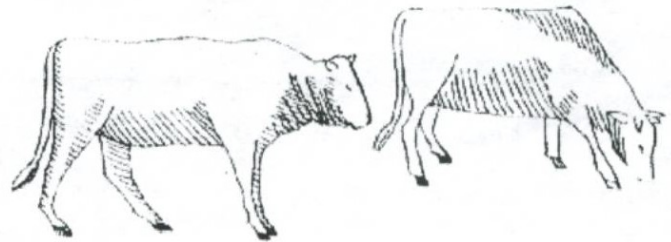
\$44.95 plus \$12 shipping (in New England).

Deluxe Sampler Package

Introduce your friends to a full range of meats in the Wolfe's Neck line. There will be weeks of enjoyment in this package.

Two sirloin strip steaks, two packages of ground beef, two packages of sausage, two packages of beef kabobs or stew meat, two packages of boneless center cut pork chops, two pork tenderloins.

\$94.95 plus \$12 shipping (in New England).



We have more gift packages available through our web site www.wolfesneckfarm.org or at the farm store.

We will also design a special gift package to your specifications.

To place an order

- * Call 207-865-4469
- * or email:
farmaine@wolfesneckfarm.org

Dawn Downs will be happy to take your order and provide you with the shipping cost and any other information.

Visa/MasterCard/Discover accepted



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Freeport, ME 04032

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You give more than meat when you give a Wolfe's Neck gift

This holiday season we are making a particular effort to get our friends to send gift packages to their friends. It is a wonderful way to introduce new people to our product and it helps support other operations at the farm.

With each gift we send an attractive gift card and a letter explaining why it is so important to buy Wolfe's Neck Beef and to support our growers. The text of that letter follows:

The history of Wolfe's Neck Natural Beef goes back to 1959 when Eleanor and Lawrence Smith started with 17 Black Angus cows and a belief in the value of preserving open space.

Their vision took a dramatic turn in 2001 when farm manager Erick Jensen, with the enthusiastic support of family members and the Wolfe's Neck Farm Foundation, started the present program, enlisting the cooperation of Maine farmers to grow beef to our protocols. Within a year, the number of cattle going to market rose from 200 annually to 4,000. More than 50 Maine farmers now raise calves for the program and the increased demand has resulted in the first planned feedlot expansion in the state in decades.

Modeled on a West Coast Coop, Oregon Country Beef, Wolfe's Neck Natural Beef is a non-profit that operates like a de facto cooperative. Our producers are paid a premium because we have been able to develop a premium market. The extra money they receive is crucial to their ability to farm profitably.

Profitability is the key to maintaining the working landscape as one farmer after another told us at a conference on preserving farmland sponsored by the

Wolfe's Neck Farm Foundation. And this program reflects the Foundation's primary mission:

To demonstrate innovative practices and marketing strategies in alternative/organic agriculture that can help preserve and revitalize Maine farming.

In the wake of our increased visibility through supermarket distribution, farm manager Jensen has received more than a hundred calls from Maine farmers who would like to participate in the program. He is now working to increase the herds of those already supplying us and teaching other farmers, particularly stressed dairy farmers, to raise beef cattle. It is his hope that in a few years, the Maine countryside will be dotted with signs designating which farms raise Wolfe's Neck Natural Beef and he fully expects more acreage to be under beef production than is now under potato production.

To what do we attribute our success? Our model has presented no risk to the individual farmers so they have been more interested in participating than they would be otherwise. For the buyer, we have guaranteed uniform high quality and reliability of supply, something our individual small producers could not do on their own. At the same time, we have been the ones to develop the premium market and deal with its complexities.

The result is what we call "market-based environmentalism," where the consumer is willing to spend more for a quality product that is raised in an environmentally responsible manner.