

## Cattle Breeder Produces Prime Beef Using Japanese Traits

A South Dakota cattle breeding operation is making Japanese beef traits available for commercial cattlemen. Prime 360 Beef is merging the best traits of Japanese Akaushi (Vol. 39, No. 4) and Wagyu breeds with leading North American breeds to produce USDA-Prime beef. Currently less than 5 percent of all processed beef grades prime. The company's goal is to produce calves with the genetic potential to grade prime a high percentage of the time.

"We could do it with straight Wagyu and Akaushi breeds, but they don't have the eye appeal of our North American breeds," says Jim Nickeson, general manager, Prime 360 Beef. "They are horned breeds and have other issues that we have been able to select out."

The company used a base line of Red Angus cows crossed with Wagyu and Akaushi, then bred them back up to 7/8 pure Japanese breeding. Horns were bred out, while the extremely high marbling, super tight udders with level floors, correct teat size, and high fertility traits of the

Japanese breeds were retained.

The female line is bred to top bulls from Red and Black Angus, Polled Red and Black Simmental, Polled Shorthorn Durham, and Lowline breeds. Embryos are flushed and transferred to recipient cows. This past spring, the first set of yearling bulls with 7/16 Japanese bloodlines from those pairings were put on the market.

"We had 72 bulls for sale and by late June had sold all but 19 without any advertising," says Nickeson.

The bulls were priced at \$5,000 each, with the top bulls held back for semen collection and sale at \$25 per straw. Nickeson projects having around 100 bulls available for spring of 2017 and between 200 and 300 in 2018. Final numbers depend on a variety of factors, including embryo conception and transfer success.

The company is not selling embryo transfer females. However, it does offer to market calves produced by customers of its bulls to help secure premiums. Prime 360 finishes its own and purchased customer calves, as



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well as selling weaned calves to other cattle feeders.

"We've been able to get from 15 to 20 cents over top market for weaned calves the past 4 years," says Nickeson. "As we grow, we want to continue to garner premium prices for our customers' calves from our bulls. Our mission is to help commercial breeders make at least \$100 more on their calves and even more if they finish them."

Finished calves are not sold under a

brand designation, yet. "We have not yet gone to marketing a line of Prime 360 Beef. However, we are looking into possibilities," says Nickeson. "Some possibilities exist for a locker-type beef program."

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Prime 360 Beef, 47982 Iwerks Rd., Big Stone City, S. Dak. 57216 (ph 605 651-3636; nickeson@tnics.com; www.prime360beef.com).

## Giant Vacuum Helps Them Double Greens Production

This Italian-made vacuum from Ortomec makes getting a second cutting from commercial scale beds of greens easier. It vacuums away clippings and other refuse, prepping a bed for a first cut or cleaning it up to grow a second cutting.

"It's an expensive piece of equipment, but without it, not many crops get cut a second time," says Bob Sutton, Sutton Ag. "Most growers plant, harvest and then rework the bed for another crop. This tool gives them a better shot at a second crop."

Sutton gives the example of a bed of spinach, which can be harvested once, gone over with the Ortomec vacuum and harvested again only 10 days later. Without the trimming and vacuuming, debris left in the field, such as half cut leaves and stems, would prevent a quality second cut.

"There are a lot of high density crops that are planted in beds, such as arugula, spring mix, lettuce, mustard, parsley, cilantro and especially spinach, that could be cut a second time," says Sutton.

Sutton notes that the self-propelled rig ranges in price from \$60,000 to \$70,000, depending on options. A pull-type version starts at \$40,000.

The unit's cutting head ranges in width from 47 to 70 in. with height adjustable from 1/2 in. to about 8 in. The 4-WD is powered by a 73 hp diesel motor. Forward speed is 1 1/4 to 2 mph.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Sutton Agricultural Enterprises, Inc., 1044 Harkins Rd., Salinas, Calif. 93901 (ph 831 422-9693; toll free 866 280-6229; www.suttonag.com; info@suttonag.com).



**Self-propelled machine vacuums away clippings and other debris from commercial scale beds of greens, making it easier to get a second cutting without having to replant.**

## She Repurposes Old Farm Stuff For Her "Barn Store"

"There are a lot of things that people would normally throw away that I can turn into beautiful, and often functional, pieces of art for a home or garden," says Jamie Steffl, who used her artistic skill to create a part-time business in 2012 that she calls The Barn Store. It's located in a cleaned and renovated building on her family's farm near Clements, Minn.

"Doing this is where I can fulfill my dream of artistry, beyond my regular job as a high school art instructor," Steffl says. During spring and summer months her days are filled attending auctions, visiting antique shows, and rummaging through old farm yards with neighbors. She takes her treasures back to her studio, located in a cleaned and converted hog shed. There she polishes them up and adds her special artistic charm to make something new and useful again.

When asked how she describes what she does, Steffl fittingly uses the acronym

F.A.R.M. That stands for Find, Alter, Repurpose and Make. Her store has a wide range of vintage home décor made from re-purposed furniture, tools, mirrors, metal containers, baskets and an assortment of other items. She also offers handmade signs, jewelry, vintage aprons and bags, goat milk lotion, alpaca fur, pillows and original paintings. Jams, pumpkins, gourds and many other items are available in September.

Steffl prepares several months for her early summer and fall sales events, and business has been brisk. Regular customers are quick to line up when the doors open to see what she's created. Her June, 2016 "Back to Business" sale marks the 5-year anniversary of The Barn Store.

Although The Barn Store is Steffl's pride and joy, she doesn't do all the work alone. She invites other rural artists to bring in their own creations as well. Her 3 older children enjoy going to auctions and antiquing with her, and one of her teenage girls even takes after her



**Jamie Steffl used her artistic skill to create a part-time business on her family's farm, working out of a converted hog shed to repurpose old farm stuff.**

mom with some of her own hand made signs to sell. In 2016 a new baby is also part of her busy schedule.

Steffl says her farmer husband and the three older children are all supportive of The Barn Store and the time it takes to prepare items for sale. "We all work together to meet each other's goals. Farming is a family business, and so is The Barn Store." Steffl is proud to

say "The Barn Store sells things made by people, not by machine. And I always look forward to people visiting the farm and checking out what we have!"

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Jamie Steffl, The Barn Store, 37479 State Highway 68, Clements, Minn. 56224 (ph 320 491-3702; www.farmfabulosity.com; jamiesteffl@gmail.com)