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MACK BROOK FARM EARNS ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED SEAL

Argyle, New York—Mack Brook Farm has recently been certified by Animal Welfare Approved. Animal Welfare Approved is a free certification granted to family farmers adhering to the high animal welfare standards outlined by the non-profit program. Accredited farms use the Animal Welfare Approved logo on their products, assuring consumers that the animals were raised humanely on pasture or range and allowed to exhibit natural behavior with minimal environmental impact.

Kevin Jablonski was born and raised on the farm his grandfather bought in the 1920s. Today, he and his fiancée, Karen Christensen, raise Angus cattle and direct market the beef from the farm. Situated between the Adirondacks and the Green Mountains of Vermont, Argyle, New York in Washington County, was a Scotch land grant and attracted immigrants from Argyll, Scotland who found the land very similar to their Scottish homeland. Raising Angus cattle, native Scottish cattle bred from indigenous wild cattle, made the most sense for Kevin and Karen and allowed them to work in concert with the land. “Why fight against nature with a breed that’s not suited for the area, when you can raise cattle that are already adapted to the land and the climate?” Kevin says. “It makes sense from a business perspective and a welfare perspective—our cattle are in the environment that is most comfortable for them.”

One problem Kevin and Karen ran into when building their herd was the weakened genetics of some Angus cattle. “The grassfed genetics have been bred out of a lot of the Angus,” Kevin says. “So we went looking for a way to get the strong, traditional bloodlines into our herd.” To that end, they acquired a bull that is the grandson of a bull brought over from Aberdeen, Scotland in the 1950s. “We went as close to the source as we could,” noted Karen, “so that we could get superior genetics.”

Mack Brook Farm’s cattle are born and raised on the farm. They eat only pasture grass and hay grown on the farm. Kevin and Karen decided to apply to the Animal Welfare Approved program when they started researching membership in American Grassfed Association (AGA). “We saw the ad for AGA,” Karen says, “and noticed we could apply for both at once. We went to the Animal Welfare Approved website and found out the program values matched our own—we were already doing things the Animal Welfare Approved way. We’ve been letting people know that we are now Animal Welfare Approved and

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the feedback has been great. The program has high standards and is up front about its standards and practices, so people trust the label. That's been a big benefit for us."

Their beef has received accolades from customers and chefs. "Our secret," says Karen, "is proper genetics, proper feed and minimal transportation." They count themselves lucky to have a USDA approved processor, Locust Grove Smokehouse, five miles from their home that welcomed the Animal Welfare Approved inspection team. "Long transport can kill the taste of the meat," Kevin says. "It reduces the marbling and negatively affects the quality. Our processor is five miles away. A New York City chef once told us he didn't believe our cattle were grassfed because of the wonderful marbling. That's how big of a difference shortened transport can make."

Mack Brook Farm beef is sold directly from the farm and at local stores. The owners are part of a farm-to-chef program that sells their beef to restaurants in New York City, such as Gramercy Tavern. They are also selling more sides to individuals who have found that buying in bulk directly from the farmer is more cost-effective. Ordering information can be found on the farm website at www.mackbrookfarm.com.

Running Mack Brook Farm is a family affair. Kevin's two sons, Jason and Jarid, live on the farm and help out when needed, especially during hay season. Karen's daughter, Gretchen, handles recipes and development from her home in Chicago. "We're excited to be Animal Welfare Approved," says Kevin. "We appreciate how the program looks after the welfare of the animals and the farmers. It's great to see the growing demand for grassfed beef."

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The Animal Welfare Approved seal is an assurance to consumers that the cattle at Mack Brook Farm have been treated according to the highest welfare standards. This seal ensures that their animals have been given continuous access to the outdoors, giving them the space and environment they need to express their natural behavior. For more information about Animal Welfare Approved, visit www.AnimalWelfareApproved.org.

