



## Principles, Standards and Audits- a 25 year commitment to our customers

### *Graze Well principles, Food Alliance certification, Raise Well principles, and Global Animal Partnership standards*

Twenty-five years ago, Country Natural Beef ranchers agreed to listen to our customers, and respond to their needs. By linking the consumer back to the ranches that raise their beef, CNB created more than a quality product for its retail customers, it created a unique relationship based on shared values.

From our initial decision in 1986, to raise and market a natural beef product with a federally approved label regarding the use of antibiotics and no added hormones, we felt the responsibility to ensure consumer confidence in our product. We knew then, as today, that many ranchers in our industry do an extremely conscientious, humane job of taking care of their land and animals. The niche we chose to fill connects our ranches directly to our customers with a verifiable set of standards and principles.

In 1990, responding to customer concerns about grazing practices, CNB ranchers, with help from rangeland experts, wrote and embraced our **Graze Well principles - a commitment to healthy land**. Each ranching member of Country Natural Beef has a written set of goals that describes the desired health, production, and biodiversity of their lands based on the Graze Well principles.

By 2001, again listening to the needs of our customers, CNB became the first certified group of beef producers to provide **third party verification** of the Graze Well principles and the care of our cattle, land, and people. All of CNB's production practices are certified by **Food Alliance**, an Oregon-based company that offers one of the most comprehensive certifications for sustainably produced food in North America. The Food Alliance certification is focused on continuous improvement in three key areas- the assurance of safe and fair working conditions; the ongoing commitment to humane treatment of animals; and the protection of the environment. CNB ranches are recertified on a three year audit cycle. In 2010, Food Alliance completed their regular process of updating and clarifying their standards with greater emphasis on animal welfare. CNB ranches will comply with the updated standards.

In response to the growing consumer interest about the humane and compassionate handling of animals, CNB worked with **Dr. Temple Grandin** in 2008 and 2009 to create our own set of **Raise Well principles - our commitment to animal care**. We developed standards that are meaningful, credible, attainable, and measurable; based on common-sense, practicality, and respect for the values and traditions we honor. We are proud that the Raise Well standards were written with and endorsed by Dr. Temple Grandin, the world's pre-eminent animal behaviorist, whose life has been dedicated to improving animal handling practices. Dr. Grandin provided great insight, support and guidance.



**Whole Foods**, a valuable partner to CNB since 1994, has worked on animal compassion standards for nearly a decade, an effort that merged into their support for the standards developed by **GAP-Global Animal Partnership**. The mission of GAP is to encourage continuous improvement in the lives of farm animals globally. This commitment, carried out collaboratively between various stakeholders including farmers, ranchers, retailers, and animal welfare advocates, is very much in line with the core values of our cooperative. In 2010, our ranchers completed third-party audits to comply with the beef standards for Global Animal Partnership. We appreciate GAP's work on refining and clarifying the standards and audits for cattle raised for beef.

Country Natural Beef acknowledges the challenges of GAP and each set of standards. We continue to strive to clarify and build on the best of existing standards, both in word and spirit, to bring a new level of transparency and integrity to the customers we serve. While the language of each varies, we believe the spirit of these standards and principles reflects the fundamental values of CNB members- how we treat the land, our employees, and our animals- to ensure consumers receive the very best natural and humanely raised beef in the marketplace today.

Our decision to listen to our customers and respond to their needs has led us on a twenty-five year journey that continues to honor the relationship from the land to the customer and back- our circle of commitment.