



## New Yorkers Trust Cowboys, Love Great Tasting Beef

Certified Hereford Beef (CHB®) received rave reviews during Memorial Day weekend in the New York City metro area. For two days American Hereford Association (AHA) President John Woolfolk, CHB LLC President Dale Micheli and AHA CEO Craig Huffhines spent time at a new CHB account, Fairway Market, located in Stamford, Conn.

The trio promoted CHB and visited with hundreds of beef consumers. Stamford is an upscale suburb of New York City where business commuters live or spend the weekends. The end result of the Memorial Day weekend beef promotion featuring CHB porterhouse, ribeye and New York strip steaks was a 62% increase in meat department sales compared to normal store levels.

Fairway Market is one of the most prestigious, high-quality

grocery store chains in the New York metropolitan area with eight locations: one on the Jersey side; six in the areas of Manhattan, Queens, Brooklyn, Pelham Manor and Plainview, N.Y.; and one in Stamford. There are plans to expand the store concept into multiple locations in the New England states and beyond.

Fairway has one of the most diverse and exclusive selections of food products of any store in the U.S. Ray Venezia, Fairway Market's meat director, is a third generation "master butcher" and has become a "food celebrity" with regular appearances each week on the New York City local news affiliate, multiple appearances on NBC's "Today Show," and "Rachael Ray," and a recent appearance on "Dr. Oz."

He is a dynamic and credible speaker with a strong advocacy message for quality beef. While CHB was being sampled in the stores, Ray was featured on Neil Cavuto's Fox Business Show, where he demonstrated how consumers can stretch their food dollars without sacrificing great summertime grilling opportunities.

Venezia has been instrumental in maintaining a very high expectation for Fairway Market's quality protein products with a dry-aged prime beef program where each store actually dry ages beef loins in a display cooler in front of the meat market. Each of his eight meat markets is a full-service butcher shop, and in the Stamford location, there were at least 10 meat market employees helping customers each of the two days of the promotion.

Venezia recently discussed with the owners of Fairway the opportunity to upgrade their self-



John Woolfolk and Dale Micheli serve CHB samples and answer a variety of questions from consumers.



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Dale and John with meat market employees during the Memorial Day weekend promotion.



service meat case, which has been predominantly commodity beef, to a more reliable and consistent CHB. He was sold on the concept of quality at an affordable price that would complement his very exclusive dry-aged prime program.

“Having the opportunity to merchandise Certified Hereford Beef in a population of over 10 million people is an enormous opportunity for us as an organization,” says Micheli. “After two days of serving CHB beef samples to hundreds of very critical grocery customers, I am as confident as ever in the quality of the product we produce with Hereford genetics. Every piece of beef we sampled got the same reaction. People loved it. It was really unbelievable.”

More than 1,800 customers came by the demo booth set in front of the store's meat department where they were encouraged to visit with authentic ranchers and try the unique qualities of CHB. Consumers asked a variety of questions about CHB such as “What is a porterhouse or t-bone cut?,” “How do you prepare it?,” “Are the cattle grass-fed?,” “What do you do about antibiotics?,” “Are the cattle humanely handled and harvested?”

“We were all surprised at the reactions of Eastern consumers

when they tried the Hereford beef,” Woolfolk says. “Comments like ‘Wow!’, ‘That’s good!’ and ‘That’s the best steak I’ve ever eaten!’ were common all day long. We were also encouraged that they trusted our answers pertaining to the safety of our product, the methods of management and feeding, and the way in which our animals are humanely cared for. These were issues important to many of them.”

Fairway Market represents a big step for the CHB program. It brings another partner to our business that will move large tonnage of fresh CHB into a market that will give us great exposure. The opportunities are growing along with the credibility of CHB.

Now going into its 16th year of production, it seems that consumers are willing to pay for quality beef if they know it's reliably consistent, they are confident they will have an enjoyable experience, it is perceived as a good value, and they are comfortable with the knowledge that they do not have to feel guilty from mistruths that are often times sensationalized in various media outlets about beef in general.

The most important thing we learned in our efforts was there is

no one who can tell the story about Hereford cattle, Hereford ranching and our Hereford heritage better than we can. I'm hoping to get more Hereford breeders involved in consumer work like this on occasion because it's amazing what an influence we can have on suburban American consumers. That influence pays dividends for our entire industry. **HW**

