

Producer Stories

Dennis & Laurie Marsh
KT Beef — Loyaltan, CA

2010

From Upper Feather River Watershed Farmers and Ranchers

Both Dennis and Laurie work full-time jobs off the ranch to pay the bills. Several years ago, when their youngest son was diagnosed with a brain tumor they took it as a sign that they must try something new. The question of what other factors could contribute to his well being resulted in better food for the whole family. The KT brand is the first letter from the names of their two sons who have been an integral part of the family business.

After more than 16 years in Sierra Valley, Dennis and Laurie Marsh have decided to give the public sale of KT Beef a try. Originally they thought this idea could be a local Co-op and quickly realized that change comes slow in the minds of many. The Marsh's who come from ranching backgrounds, Dennis originally from Santa Clara Valley and Half Moon Bay and Laurie from Half Moon Bay decided that providing a quality product from Sierra Valley name was worthy of their efforts.

The Marsh's have the support of the new owners at The Golden West restaurant in Loyaltan. The commitment by owner and chef of the Golden West started as a six month trial for both the Marsh's and Scott & Barbara Widder. Turns out the product has been well received and is gaining popularity with both locals and people passing through Sierra Valley. The Golden West has made the decision to sell only KT beef which the Marsh's realize is a real commitment by a business owner in Sierra Valley.



Part of the story of KT Beef is the story of Sierra Valley, the place the Marsh's chose to raise their family and live the lifestyle of choice. Their introduction to sales of KT Beef to the public was at the Romano's Sierra Valley Farms in Beckwourth, the only on-farm Farmer's Market in California. Dennis recounts that the first week they set up shop to sell their natural meat, they were already \$300 in the hole with the booth fee and county and state permits. "That first day we sold \$50 of our product and I was questioning if this was such a good idea?" But they hung in there and sales to the public picked up plus they developed a relationship with a local restaurant.

At the Farmer's Market, Dennis and Laurie made a great connection with Sean Connery, chef at Longboards Restaurant in Graeagle. They hit it off and before long Sean would purchase whatever meat cuts were unsold at the end of a market and take them back to his restaurant. They were happy that their product ended up in the hands of someone with a creative and capable cooking talent. Unfortunately, these markets are only available seasonally so additional sales outlets need to be explored for the rest of the year.



Ranch Highlights

- ◆ Attributes superior taste and tenderness to the absence of any chemicals, hormones or antibiotics; the 21 day dry aging process and the feed base that is naturally occurring in the Sierra Valley.

University of California Cooperative Extension (<http://ucanr.org/waterquality>)

Upper Feather River Watershed Group (<http://www.ufrwg.org>)

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KT Beef — A Healthy Natural Alternative

Quality and **Consistency** are the two most important things in the Marsh's meat business endeavor. When they first started to sell their natural beef locally they encountered what they call "Negative Public Sentiment" towards ranchers, cowboys and the cattle industry. "The general public is ill informed, and really has no one to talk to that can explain the real truth about the cattle industry," commented Dennis. He remembered the original conversations with the public as his least enjoyable part of the whole process, of which over the course of several months turned into an opportunity for him to dispel some of the myths the public holds about ranching and the raising of livestock.



Twice a week Dennis leaves Sierra Valley at 4:30 in the morning driving to Reno to pick up the remains of the beer brewing process at several breweries in Reno. He takes a somewhat shorter trip to Truckee to get a similar product from another brewery. Dennis mixes the brewery byproduct with chopped hay for the 120-150 day finishing period. Feed has become noticeably harder to get in the winter months. "People must be drinking a whole lot less beer", commented Marsh. The quality of the end product is based upon the feed mix they have developed and want to stick with. Just recently Laurie and Dennis have purchased a USDA certified meat locker that will address their needs to have product year round.

Future Funding

Dennis and Laurie are utilizing Alternative Energy (both wind and solar) in their ranch plan. They also see the possibility of carbon credits for an additional funding source.



"Getting paid for what I am already doing makes sense; this is a clean and green operation."



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