

150,000-acre historic Eastern Oregon ranch certified organic

by Bend_Weekly_News_Sources

BURNS, Ore. — The historic McEwen Ranch announced this week its 150,000 plus acres have been certified organic by the USDA's National Organic Program. This is the culmination of a three-year process during which the land must be free of all chemical inputs such as fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides. With its organic certification, the McEwen ranch, which at one time was a part of the historic Miller-Lux cattle empire of the late 1800s, is believed to be the largest organic-certified ranch in the United States. It is also one of the finest organic grass ranches in the Pacific Northwest, with extensive and high-quality native grass cover throughout. The managers of the ranch have negotiated an exclusive deal with Dakota Beef, the nation's leading organic beef provider, for all the cattle the ranch can produce.

The organic certification of the McEwen Ranch marks an important step forward for the organic beef industry. "The issue with organic cattle isn't about the quantity of supply," said Dennis Crowell, manager of the McEwen Ranch. "The issue has been a quality of supply and we intend for this ranch to change that." The McEwen Ranch currently has the capacity for up to 5,000 head of organic cattle and with modest additional capital investment and increased staffing, the ranch has the grass and water capacity to significantly increase the amount of organic cattle that can be raised on the land. "It's time for the organic beef industry to shift the paradigm and start to focus on quality, rather than trying to get the green stamp on just any piece of beef," explained Matt Grove, President of Dakota Beef LLC. "The tremendous quality of these McEwen cattle is what makes this deal so important to Dakota Beef," he added.

To ensure only the highest quality cattle will graze on these prime ranch lands, the managers of the McEwen Ranch have spent the past year working closely with the Bill Davis, owner of the Rollin Rock Ranch and Chairman of the Certified Angus Beef Board of Directors, who produces performance breeders of premium certified Angus bulls and have provided the ranch with all the bulls for its operation. The Rollin Rock and Hinman Angus have a combined 85 year history of selective breeding of certified Angus cattle. "We're extremely proud to have provided the McEwen Ranch with outstanding bulls from our seed stock for its Oregon ranch lands," said Bill Davis. "The McEwen Ranch has taken a huge step towards controlling the largest quantity of certified organic Angus cattle in the country," he added. The first Angus bulls were brought to the United States from Scotland in 1873. These hearty cattle can thrive in a wide variety of challenging environments and are prized for producing consistently tender, flavorful beef.

Background on The McEwen Ranch

The McEwen Ranch represents a remarkable assemblage, consisting of numerous significant ranches within its boundaries that would be virtually impossible to create today. The McEwen is a true heritage ranch, steeped in the history of the Old West. It's home to several noteworthy historic corrals, homesteads and other sites of historic importance. The ranch lands were once hunting grounds for the Paiute, Shoshone and Bannock tribes and was also the location of historic British Hudson's Bay Company and American fur-trapping expeditions in the 1820's. The lands, 90 miles west of Boise, ID, are also the site of a historic military wagon road constructed shortly after the end of the Civil War and were at one time home to the historic "Flying T" and "Diamond J" brands.

Today, the McEwen is one of the largest working cattle ranches in the Pacific Northwest, comprising approximately 150,000 acres of rugged and spectacular western landscape. Its low-valley areas (3,400 ft. elevation) offer outstanding wintering for cattle due to mild climate. It combines the qualities of a superior cattle ranch with a game preserve and recreational retreat, and possesses exceptional habitat for big game, upland birds and native fish. Ranging in elevation from 3,400 feet to 6,037 feet above sea level, this magnificent grasslands, rugged mountains, far-reaching juniper forests, broad valleys and spectacular canyons. The Property includes 50,217 acres of deeded land, grazing rights to approximately 100,000 acres of Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land, and extensive water and mineral rights throughout.

Dakota Beef LLC is the leading certified organic beef company in the country, operating its own USDA-inspected and certified organic processing plant in Howard, South Dakota. Founded in 2000, the company only sells certified organic beef products guaranteed to be free of antibiotics and growth-promoting hormones. Dakota Beef cattle are meticulously raised and well cared for, resulting in consistently flavorful and tender beef.

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