



We are a 1500 acre Farm, Ranch and USDA Inspected Meat Processor. We grow Hay, Cattle, Apples, Grain, and Goats. We process our own livestock in our on-farm USDA inspected facility. We process livestock for other local ranchers, we are located in Mancos Colorado

### A Road 39 Ranch Opinion: *Grass Fed Grass vs. Grain Fed*



As a *Ranch* and a *Meat Processor* we get asked the question frequently whether grass fed or grain fed beef is better. We usually answer by asking a question back... *What do you mean by better?* **Road 39 Ranch** specializes in grass fed/grass finished beef, but we process grain finished animals for many local ranches. We have the benefit of seeing animals and how they were raised from birth to wrapper. We eat what we grow.

### **A Few Comments:**

1. All beef is grass fed - all cattle eat grass; grazing in fields or fed hay, a large portion of their diet is grass or hay. Usually people are asking if it is exclusively grass fed. This usually mean grass finished vs grain finished. The actual question is just before harvest, when the beef is being brought to final weight, is it done with all grass? or supplemented with grains or other proteins and sugars.
2. Grass finished beef take a little longer to get to a weight than grain finished animals.
3. If you have enough pasture, grass finished beef is easier to care for. You simply let them do what cattle do, graze. You need to supplement or feed hay only when the snow makes grass difficult to reach.
4. Grain finished cattle often spend the last portion of their life in feed lots or pens so that they can be easily fed the correct ration. This requires daily attention.
5. Grass Finished and Grain Finished cattle taste different, the fat color looks different, the marbling in the meat and the overall location of the fat appears different. Five people will swear grass finished tastes better, five others will swear grain finished tastes better. We suspect that it is a matter of taste and what a person is used to. (some people put ketchup on steak)
6. Which one is healthier for you, is a debate many more qualified people have already weighed in on. University extension offices, medical experts, and millions of people on the internet can give you more "facts" than we can.

### **Road 39 Ranch Opinion:**

*So which is better?* Our opinion is that animals that live a low stress life produce the most tender, most tasty, and healthiest meat. When an animal is stressed you can tell because they smell different. We believe this translates into the way the meat tastes. Cattle do best when they live in a herd, have access to water and grass, can walk and travel about. Like people, some cows just don't like some other cows. Left alone larger herds break into smaller groups. At Road 39 Ranch we have a multi generational herd. Calves and younger cattle learn from the older animals. We believe that cows were designed to eat grass, to live in a herd, to live in open pastures. We raise our animals in a very low stress environment. *We believe these factors have a bigger influence on taste, and health than the simple question of grass vs grain.* If a calf is born, then sold at auction at 500lbs, transported to a grazing operation and raised for a season to 1000lbs, sold and transported to a feed lot for finishing to 1200 to 1400lbs then transported to a processing facility...these factors have a big impact on the health and taste of the final meat. Cattle grazing in fields eat grass, weeds, leaves, and brush. They have choices. If they don't like the cow next to them they walk away from it. Some like to graze at night, some like to

graze in the heat of the day. We have found that this; more relaxed environment versus an environment of confinement, transporting, crowding, and scheduled feeding; along with the competition for the feed trough or water trough and the stress of constant new surroundings, is a bigger factor than the feed alone. Grass fed and grain fed animals taste different. Which is better? **Beef raised on small local farms, that live like cows, in a low stress environment.**

