

Country Cuts

By Les Floyd

A WEST Cumbrian farm shop which promotes the ethical treatment of animals has expanded its product range and facilities, with its message of healthy eating appealing to a growing number of discernable consumers.

Owner's of *Country Cuts*, Elaine and Martin Phizacklea, have received huge interest for their range of organic and ethically produced meat products, and have recently added a larger shop at their premises in Santon Bridge, Holmrook.

Elaine Phizacklea said: "We feel strongly about letting animals mature naturally with good food and in their natural environment, which is the basis of organic farming. Unnecessary use of anti-biotics in animals and any kind of chemical growth promoters-must, in time, have consequences."

"Taking animals to the abattoir is not pleasant, but farming is about producing food and animals ultimately are food. We, therefore, take great pride in giving them as happy a life as possible and thereby producing excellent quality meat."

Country Cuts are finding consumers have a raised awareness of what they put into their bodies – helped by such people as celebrity chef, Jamie Oliver, and Prince Charles – and are being much more selective with their food. Elaine explained:

"We get more and more people with varying food allergies coming to the shop. People are also starting to become aware of 'supermarket meat' and understanding that all that looks red and juicy is not necessarily good meat, but it means the supermarket can give a much longer shelf life and less waste, hence greater profit."

"Jamie Oliver has been the best ambassador for food awareness that we could imagine. Prince Charles is also a huge influence in the promotion of healthy food"

Country Cuts is committed to, wherever possible, using organic feed and treatment for their livestock, and believe their treatment is second-to-none in the agricultural industry.

"Our animals live a good life," said Elaine. "They are kept in a natural environment, less densely populated than ordinary farms, because we do not have chemical fertilisers to make grass and crops grow faster."

She went on: "They always have comfortable bedding, often straw, and plenty of space where they are housed. Grazing animals like cows and sheep are fed mainly on herb and clover rich grass. Our pigs have their own grazing land, woodland area and plenty of nutritious food to help them grow slowly and naturally. "They are all fed organic feed and have natural water sources. We also try and keep human contact with them."

An exception to their organic rule comes only if an animal has an acute illness which conventional veterinarian remedies can ease, after other options have been exhausted.

Country Cuts are also benefiting from the digital-age, with their upgraded website bringing in an increasing interest from Internet surfers. Elaine said: "We've picked up loyal customers from all over the country, through our website. With people taking more care in what they eat, a lot are finding that the Internet provides them with a vast wealth of knowledge on the subject of ethical and organic farming, and this leads to repeat sales for us, because we provide the sort of good meat that people just don't get at the supermarket."

The Country Cuts website is at www.country-cuts.co.uk