

## **Local farmers getting noticed**

Mere weeks after a major Vancouver Island grocery chain began heavily promoting locally raised meats, shoppers Island-wide are starting to take notice of local producers.

Last month, Country Grocer officially launched its “Vancouver Island Raised Meats” section in each of its six Vancouver Island stores, including its Esquimalt and Royal Oak locations. The section features pork products from Tannadice Farms in the Comox Valley; beef from Island Pastures, also in the Comox Valley; chicken from Farmhouse Poultry in the Cowichan Valley; and other seasonal items.

“This is huge, absolutely,” says Allen McWilliam, who operates Tannadice Farms with his wife Heather. “We’re seeing sales up since the section launched, but more importantly we’re noticing an increased level of interest in local products.”

McWilliam says he’s received several e-mails from Country Grocer shoppers inquiring about Tannadice Farms and their ethical farming practices.

“After I answer their questions, I always invite them to visit the farm if they’re ever up this way,” he says. “We respect our animals; we don’t medicate their feeds and we don’t feed them growth hormones or animal byproducts. We’re proud of our methods, and we’re always willing to welcome guests to the farm.”

The encouraging response isn’t unique to Tannadice Farms, or even just the producers themselves.

“We’ve received e-mails from quite a few customers thanking us for carrying local products,” echoes Tammy Averill, marketing manager for Country Grocer. “The less-travelled food appeals to a lot of people these days, and food safety and origin are always hot topics. Country Foods is locally owned and operated, so it’s a good fit.

“Our director of meats and seafood, Dave Hubscher, has visited each of the farms,” she adds. “He respects their practices and he feels really good about putting their products on our shelves.”

It’s Hubscher’s dedication to local producers to which McWilliam largely credits the success of the new section. Without the hard work of people like Hubscher and locally minded companies like Country Grocer, he says, Vancouver Island might be a different place.

“If you want nice green, pastoral settings like we have here on Vancouver Island, you’d better have a strong agricultural base to support it,” he explains. A vibrant agricultural sector is also a strong economic driver and contributes to the long-term sustainability of the region, he adds.

“It’s a feel-good thing,” says Averill. “Sometimes you have to make decisions based on the right things to do.”

*Country Grocer is located at 4420 West Saanich Road in Royal Oak and 1153 Esquimalt Road in Esquimalt. For more information, visit [www.countrygrocer.com](http://www.countrygrocer.com). To learn more about Tannadice Farms’ products and sustainable farming methods, visit [www.tannadicefarms.com](http://www.tannadicefarms.com).*

**Photo:** Heather and Allen McWilliam, of Tannadice Farms, are receiving Island-wide attention for their ethical farming practices, thanks to Country Grocer's new "Vancouver Island Raised Meats" section.

**Other image:** Signage for Country Grocer's "Vancouver Island Raised Meats" section.

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