

# Organic Meat Processing Plant has plans to locate in Howard

By: Elisa Sand

Madison Daily Leader

October 17, 2003

Dakota Beef Company, LLC, intends to begin processing organic beef in Howard by next spring.

Howard is the first of three locations the company plans to establish. The other two locations have not been secured, but will also be located in the Midwest.

The plant will be located in the 20,000-sq.-ft. building formerly used as a beef processing facility in Howard before it closed in the 1990s. It has most recently been used as a storage warehouse for Clarke Machines.

One key player in negotiating with Dakota Beef and securing the company's location in Howard was Miner County Community Revitalization.

"We are pleased Dakota Beef selected Howard for the location of its first facility," said MCCR Executive Director Randy Parry. "MCCR sees this as an excellent way to increase employment opportunities for our community."

When at full capacity, Dakota Beef will have the capabilities of processing more than 80 head of cattle per day or 70,000 pounds of organic beef product, and employing at least 40 employees.

Parry cautioned, however, that this company does not intend to begin at full production from the first day processing starts.

It will begin with limited production, he said, and steadily build toward full production.

Scott Lively, president and CEO of Dakota Beef, said he feels Howard is the ideal location for this new facility.

"We believe this purchase makes Dakota Beef the largest 100 percent organic beef processor in the country, Lively said.

Seldon Moreland, communications director for Dakota Beef, said that once at full production, the

plant could give Dakota Beef the capability to jump ahead of production of other certified organic beef companies in the country.

"From our research, other companies are either operating on a smaller scale or use a third party to process the cattle," Moreland said.

Dakota Beef Company is working with International Certified Services in Medina, N.D., for their organic certification in both the required USDA national Organic Program and the voluntary Farm Verified Organic international label program.

The company will be a fully integrated beef processing company producing private label certified organic beef for both the retail and food service industries.

Moreland said Dakota Beef has been developing for about the past two years by securing investors and developing a tracking system for beef growers who will be providing certified organic beef for the plant.

For area producers who wish to become certified organic, Moreland said, Dakota Beef intends to work with them to meet specific criteria.

Dave Clarke owner of Clarke Machines in Howard, said he purchased the former beef plant in 1998 in an effort to clean up the appearance of the building.

His hope, he said, was to re-sell the building within the first year. That transaction took five years.

As a result of the sale, Clarke said, he is looking at purchasing his brother's Clarke Implement building, which closed in February, and constructing an additional warehouse on his property.

Clarke said he feels Dakota Beef will have a positive impact not only on Howard but also on South Dakota.

"Organic beef has a tremendous interest from the way it sounds," Clarke said.