

Slaughter facility to be added at new Dakota Beef plant at Howard

By Chuck Clement

The Mitchell Daily Republic

August 27, 2004

HOWARD — Officials at Dakota Beef decided to expand their operations in Howard even before workers started processing livestock quarters at the company's organic beef plant.

Dakota Beef had planned to kill its livestock at an Omaha, Neb., slaughterhouse and transport the carcasses to Howard, but Tony Brady, a company official, encouraged Scott Lively, the CEO at Dakota Beef, to add a slaughterhouse to the Howard plant.

Lively said the new slaughter facility will make the processing plant more efficient for the company to operate.

Dakota Beef officials have described the proposed slaughtering facility as the most modern in North America.

"It's going to be ultra clean and our workers are going to be ultra careful with our product," Lively said. "We're talking about building an organic beef slaughtering facility, and a lot of extra work has been done to make certain we keep our organic designation."

Brady met with members of the Howard City Council on June 9th discuss adding a 5,200 square-foot beef slaughtering facility. The current plant is located in an area zoned for industrial use, but Dakota Beef needed to obtain a special exemption from the City of Howard to add the kill floor onto the south side of the existing building.

Howard officials were told that the slaughterhouse would have no impact on the city's cur-

rent wastewater system, since the company plans to either treat waste products for easier disposal or ship waste to rendering facilities.

After receiving a special exemption from the city, Dakota Beef officials also needed to obtain permits from the S.D. Department of Environment and Natural Resources before proceeding with the construction of the slaughterhouse.

Dakota Beef Co., which is based in Chicago, announced in October 2003 the purchase of the 20,000-square-foot plant in Howard. The Chicago company also outlined plans to start limited production of 100 percent organic beef in 2004, increasing that production to processing more than 80 head of cattle per day. The Howard plant has the capacity at full production to deliver more than 70,000 pounds of organic beef daily.

"We're committed to start breaking quarters of beef at the Howard plant by August and shipping product to our customers," Lively said in July.

In phase one of opening the plant, the company will hire 10 employees to take the beef quarters and break them down into smaller cuts of meat. During phase two, Dakota Beef will employ a total of 40 workers after the slaughterhouse is finished and operating.

Dakota Beef will invest more than \$1 million in the renovated plan to bring it into full operation, according to Lively.

The Chicago company has a three-year track

record with its customers. Dakota Beef sells organic meat to restaurants in many cities including San Francisco, Chicago, Boston and New York. Dakota Beef also has the exclusive rights for two years to provide organic beef to Earth's Best baby food, a product line belonging to the Hain Celestial Group Inc., a major natural-and specialty-food company.

To supply its customers with organic beef, the company outsourced all of its production with an Omaha processing plant. Dakota Beef bought the Howard plant from Ellis Meats, of Minneapolis, Minn., to lower the company's processing expenses and bring down the cost of its organic beef products.

Ellis Meats closed the Howard plant during the 1990s when the company moved to consolidate its operations in Pipestone, Minn. The plant had previously processed ground beef and steaks for two national restaurant chains.

The Howard plant is located near Dakota Beef's supply of organic beef, since the company has a feed yard in Yankton. The company is developing a second feed yard near Madison.