

EXHIBIT 16
DATE 2/8/05
HB 484

William J. and Kristina M. Martinell
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2005 Montana State Legislative Session

Attention: 2005 Montana Legislators

We would like to express our support of the legislative bill which would allow the use of portable kill floors in Montana.

We are fourth generation cattle ranchers in southwestern Montana. The Martinell family homesteaded here in 1893 so this land has been in the family for 112 years.

Commodity beef prices have been good the last couple years, but previous to that they were poor for about eight years. Poor calf prices, combined with ongoing drought, have led us to look for alternative ways to increase our income so we can stay in business. About four years ago we started selling grass-fed beef by the quarter half, or whole to families. We have had some success with this value-added venture and believe that we will sell more beeves in the future.

The two biggest challenges of this venture are the cost and declining carcass quality associated with transporting our beeves the 125 miles to the kill plant to be processed. Being able to use a portable kill floor would address both of these issues.

In current economic times, it is essential for agricultural businesses to diversify and not be totally dependent on commodity prices to derive a living. Legalizing portable kill floors would be a good way for the state of Montana to support small farmers and ranchers, thus keeping their businesses alive.

In conclusion, we believe that a allowing portable kill floors in Montana would allow some economic advantage for value-added agricultural businesses in Montana and we are taking this opportunity to voice our support for this.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Bill Martinell
Kristina M. Martinell

William J. Martinell
Kristina M. Martinell