

Company works for complete meat

Boulder Natural Solutions targets grocers, producers

By Alicia Wallace

Camera Business Writer

Kelly Murphy and Pete Eckes have a combined 50 years of experience in the conventional meat business.

Murphy worked in pricing and trading, and Eckes in various positions, from being a meat-cutter to sales and marketing.

After witnessing the growth of the natural and organic sector, the two decided to combine their skills.

The result was Boulder Natural Solutions — a business that works with producers, retailers and restaurateurs to expand their offerings to include natural and organic meats.

"I just didn't see my future going in the direction (the conventional businesses) were taking," Murphy said. "Living in Boulder made me think of things a little differently."

Under the U.S. Department of Agriculture's definition, meats labeled as "natural" have to be minimally processed and cannot contain any artificial or synthetic ingredients.

"But retailers are saying, 'We want the true natural,'" Eckes said.

So Boulder Natural Solutions extends its definition to include no antibiotics, no hormones and a vegetarian feed.

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Natural Solutions works toward complete meat

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"Humane handling is very important," Eckes said.

The company started last year.

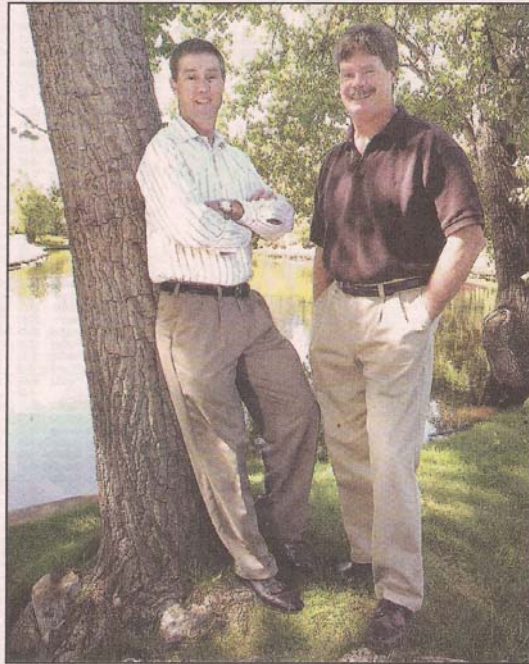
In 2004, meat and seafood sales in the natural grocery market grew 17.6 percent to \$622 million, according to the Boulder-based Natural Foods Merchandiser. People who are pursuing a healthier lifestyle — baby boomers, new parents or recent college grads — are driving growth of natural and organic offerings, said Mel Coleman, chairman of Denver-based Coleman Natural Meats.

"The natural meat shopper crosses into both the natural and conventional stores," Coleman said. "We're seeing an increase in the growth of natural meat of all species."

Boulder Natural Solutions, which has worked with Coleman Natural Meats, is focused right now on natural pork offerings, but the company has plans to expand into beef, poultry and possibly its own branded product, Murphy said.

For now, the focus is on growing the category with the help of the small producers — the restaurant owners and the retailers.

"It's the smaller ones that



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Pete Eckes, left, and Kelly Murphy, co-own Boulder Natural Solutions, a business that works with grocers and producers to add natural meat products.

will help the growth of the industry," Murphy said.

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