“Give Thanks” template letter-to-the-editor

Dear editor,

Step 1: CHOOSE AN OPENING FROM THE FIVE BELOW

[Opening option 1] With everyone from New York City to Hollywood adding their 2 cents about how food is raised these days, it’s important you hear from the people who are actually doing the raising – [farmers or ranchers] like me.

[Opening option 2] Most folks never get the opportunity to see where food comes from. But the fact is, the food at the center of your family gatherings and holiday celebrations started on a [farm or ranch] like mine.

[Opening option 3] Did you know that one-in-eight Americans don’t have access to enough food for an active, healthy life? America’s farmers and ranchers are proud of the role we play in raising safe, wholesome and affordable food.

[Opening option 4] The foundation of American agriculture has always been, and continues to be, family farms and ranches. Let me tell you a little bit about my family [farm or ranch] so that this holiday season, a few more folks will know where their food comes from.

[Opening option 5] There seems to be some confusion about how food gets from my [farm or ranch] to your plate. Movies, books, talk shows and even newspaper articles are all taking guesses about where food comes from, but I’m writing to give you a first-hand perspective from an actual [farmer or rancher].

STEP 2: CUSTOMIZE THE PARAGRAPH BELOW. AIM FOR 3-4 SENTENCES

I am a cattle [farmer or rancher] from [city], [state]. [Insert information about you and your operation. For example, how many head of cattle or how many acres of land are you in charge of? What breed of cattle do you raise? How does the beef you raise make it to the consumers’ plate (keep it simple and consumer-friendly)? Who is involved in your cattle operation (any family members)? Are you also employed outside the farm/ranch? If so, what do you do? How did your farm or ranch get its start? Has it been in the family for multiple generations or did you or your family start up the operation? What does raising cattle mean to you?]"
helping those in need. In the spirit of the holidays, support our local food bank – [insert name of your local food bank]. Donate food or serve a meal.

[Closing option 4] Our family raises a wide variety of foods – everything from beef to [insert other foods raised, if available] – making it possible for people to enjoy a wide array of foods that taste great and are good for you. This holiday season, take a moment to say “thanks” for the bounty of food in this country.

STEP 4: SIGNATURE

Name
Title
Farm or ranch name
Address
Phone number
E-mail address

Step 5: LOOK BACK AT YOUR LETTER AND CREATE A 10 WORDS OR LESS TITLE

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Helpful Tips:

1. **Word count.** Most letters-to-the-editor should be less than 150 words. However, to determine the word count requirements of your specific newspaper, look for guidelines on their Web site in the “Opinion” section or call the newspaper’s main phone number.

2. **Exclusive.** Letters should be exclusive to the newspaper. For example, don’t send the same letter to both the *Kansas City Star* and the *Topeka Capital-Journal*. Also make sure to customize any template letters to represent your operation and personal experiences. Your newspaper is more likely to run a letter that sounds authentic.

3. **Submission method.** Most newspapers prefer letters to be e-mailed to a specific e-mail address. This e-mail address usually is found on their Web site in the “Opinion” section. Copy and paste the text of the letter into the body of an e-mail; do not send the letter as an e-mail attachment. Newspapers often have software programs to identify e-mails with attachments and delete them. If you don’t have the Internet, letters can be sent to a fax number or a mailing address. This contact information can be obtained by calling the newspaper’s main phone number.

4. **Signature.** When signing a letter, include your full name, farm or ranch name (if applicable), mailing address and phone number. Occasionally, the newspaper will call to verify you wrote the letter. Your phone number and address will not be published.

5. **Help.** For help submitting your letter-to-the-editor, please contact Audrey Monroe at 303/850-3363 or amonroe@beef.org.