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## Custom slaughter and meat-processing plant being built in Lacombe industrial park

By HARLEY RICHARDS Advocate business editor

The Alternative Livestock Capital?

Central Alberta might one day claim this title — if Armin Mueller, Werner Siegrist and Yvo Schmucki have their way.

The three men are partners in **Canadian Premium Meats**, a custom slaughter and meat-processing plant currently being built in Lacombe. The 31,000-square-foot facility is being designed to handle a range of animals: cattle, bison, elk, deer and perhaps others.

"We're even talking ostrich," said Mueller.

He and Siegrist stressed that **Canadian Premium Meats** will not process its own meat. Instead, it will do custom work — killing, cutting and packaging for a variety of producers.

In addition to accepting a mix of animal species, the plant will be able to focus on special products like organic or hormone-free **meats**.

Siegrist thinks **Canadian Premium Meats** will address a problem facing producers who raise non-traditional livestock.

"These people don't really have a place to process it right now," he said.

Once you provide them with a way to get their product ready for market, interest in alternative livestock should grow, added Mueller.

"There's way more to Alberta than beef," he said.

"They all will have a chance in the future.

"If we can do ostriches, there will be an ostrich industry again."

In addition to being federally inspected, **Canadian Premium Meats** is expected to have European Union approval.

Cooler and freezer storage will be available on site, and packaging services offered.

Producers will be able to obtain grading information about yield analysis, and meat processed at the plant will be traceable to its farm of origin.

Kill capacity will be about 35 animals per hour, with up to 15 processed each hour.

About 15 to 20 workers will be employed at the outset, with this number growing to 40 as production ramps up.

Mueller and Siegrist said they're not aware of other similar plants, and they hope to draw livestock from outside Alberta.

They would also like to see producers band together to form co-ops or associations that use the plant.

"Rather than build a plant themselves, they have the opportunity to build a marketing group instead," said Siegrist, pointing out that such groups — or individual producers — could use their own packaging and labelling.

Mueller, Siegrist and Schmucki are working toward a January completion of their plant, with the foundation already in place. They hope to be operating on a significant scale by the spring. The partners tried unsuccessfully to build a slaughterhouse in Sylvan Lake before choosing Wolf Creek Industrial Park in Lacombe.



Photo by RANDY FIEDLER/Advocate staff

**Border Paving upgrades the road adjacent to the construction site of the new Canadian Premium Meats in Lacombe's Wolf Creek Industrial Park. Work on the \$7.5 million project is expected to be completed early next year.**

A fall construction start was postponed, with work finally started in June. The total cost of the project is estimated at about \$7.5 million, with DGH Engineering of St. Andrews, Man., responsible for the work. Mueller, Siegrist and Schmucki all live in Central Alberta. Mueller raises bison near Bentley, Siegrist is a Leslieville-area accountant and Schmucki operates Y.B. Quality **Meats** near Penhold. **Canadian Premium Meats'** website is at [www.cpmeats.com](http://www.cpmeats.com).

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