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AUSTIN, Texas (January 4, 2005). In recognition of its commitment to raising the bar for the treatment of farm animals with its new Animal Compassion Foundation and for offering a wide selection of vegetarian and vegan foods, Whole Foods Market has been named "Best Animal-Friendly Retailer" by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) in their just-announced second annual Proggly Awards. The organization awards the Proggly Awards to recognize people, companies and organizations that exemplify animal-friendly progress in 21st century culture and commerce.

Whole Foods Market recently announced plans to launch the Animal Compassion Foundation, which will provide education and research services to assist and inspire ranchers and meat producers around the world to achieve a higher standard of animal welfare excellence. The company will donate five percent of its global sales on Tuesday, January 25 to establish the foundation.

"We appreciate the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals choosing Whole Foods Market for their Best Animal-Friendly Retailer Award. Whole Foods Market already has comprehensive animal welfare standards superior to any other food retailer we're aware of, and we are proud to be recognized for striving to raise the bar even higher," said Margaret Wittenberg, vice president of governmental and public affairs for Whole Foods Market. "Through our new Animal Compassion Foundation, we are committed to providing producers the educational opportunities to learn more about how to incorporate these enhanced animal compassion methods and network with each other to share best practices."

In December 2003, Whole Foods Market began a rigorous process of creating enhanced farm animal treatment standards above and beyond the strict animal welfare already required by the company. These enhanced standards are to be completed by 2008 for every species sold by the company and are being developed jointly by Whole Foods Market and animal welfare advocacy groups. In addition to People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, other participants include The Humane Society of the United States;; Viva! USA; Animal Welfare Institute; Animal Rights International; animal scientists including Dr. Ian Duncan of the University of Guelph and Dr. Renee Bergeron of Université Laval; and Steritech, an independent third-party animal welfare auditor.

The launch of the Animal Compassion Foundation parallels the development of these upcoming enhanced species-specific standards, which will give shoppers peace of mind in knowing they can find the highest-quality meat products that adhere to Whole Foods Market's strict standards and values which include raising farm animals with compassion.
