

For Immediate Release

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New mobile slaughter unit to expand Hawai'i Island meat production *Cooperative venture to offer informational workshops in Hilo and Pahala*

Kamuela, Hawai'i—May 7, 2015—Small-scale ranchers who raise livestock on Hawai'i Island will soon have a new option for quality, humane, and convenient slaughter services, and can learn about this new offering at upcoming workshops in Hilo and Pahala.

A mobile slaughter unit capable of processing pigs, sheep, goats, and cattle will open for business on the island in early 2016. Hawai'i Island Meat (HIM), a cooperative business created in response to the expressed needs of island ranchers for additional local slaughter facilities, will be facilitating two free informational workshops for producers interested in accessing the service.

The workshops will be held in Hilo from 5 to 6 p.m. on Sunday, May 17, at the Komohana Agricultural Research Station, 875 Komohana St., and in Pahala from 5 to 6 p.m. on Sunday, June 14, at the Pahala Community Center, 96-1149 Kamani St.

Like their counterparts in the continental United States, many meat producers on Hawai'i Island face significant barriers to starting and maintaining their businesses. Despite its abundant ranch lands and ranching operations, the island currently imports 83 percent of its beef and more than 95 percent of its pork, lamb, and goat products due to competition from imported meat products, high operational costs, and insufficient access to U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) inspected slaughterhouses.

A task force assembled by the Big Island Resource Conservation & Development Council, Hawai'i Small Business Development Center, and The Kohala Center conducted a feasibility study with input from Hawai'i Island ranchers to assess the viability of a mobile slaughter unit. The study found clear demand from producers, with 90 percent of those surveyed interested in using the unit and 70 percent committed to investing their own money in the project. In late 2014, a producer steering committee was formed to establish HIM, a producer-owned cooperative that will operate the first mobile slaughter unit in the Hawaiian Islands. The mobile facility will bring USDA-inspected slaughter services directly to ranches and regional docking sites around the island. This method has been successfully used elsewhere in the U.S., reducing

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the stress on animals transported to faraway slaughterhouses and improving the quality and availability of locally grown meats.

HIM’s 36-foot trailer, made possible with funding from the Hawai‘i Department of Agriculture, will meet USDA sanitation standards and be capable of processing eight to 10 head of cattle, 15 pigs, and 30 lamb or goats per day.

“Not only will the mobile slaughter unit help to revitalize family ranching operations on Hawai‘i Island, it will increase the amount of healthy, locally grown protein available to our communities, and can be part of the solution to reduce the island’s population of feral and invasive cattle, pigs, sheep, and goats,” said Melanie Bondera, cooperative business development specialist at The Kohala Center. “Locally produced meats are also in high demand by island residents, visitors, and gourmet chefs, so the increased availability will contribute positively to farm-to-fork programs and our local economy.”

In recent years, mobile slaughter units have increased in popularity across the United States because they are typically cheaper to build and operate than fixed facilities, more adaptable to the varying needs of diverse livestock operations, and allow for on- or near-farm slaughter which many consider to be more humane than transporting animals long distances. More than two dozen such units currently operate around the country, with many managed by producer cooperatives formed specifically to operate slaughter services by and for area ranchers.

More information about the program is available on HIM’s website at HawaiiIslandMeat.com or via email at HawaiiIslandMeat@gmail.com.

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