

Frank talk

Is this new breed of hot dog really better? A farmer's dream dog gets the stamp of approval from discerning moms, thanks to a recipe that calls for prime cuts of meat and focuses on happy cows, healthy kids



The Life Choices healthy hot dog is made with natural preservatives and no fillers.

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FOOD EDITOR

HORNBUURY, ONT.—Matthew von Teichman wants you to know what MSM means and why you won't see it on his hot dog label. MSM stands for mechanically separated meat, the paste-like mixture that's created by forcing bones, with attached meat, under high pressure through a sieve or similar device to separate the bone and meat. The first ingredient on Life Choices' hot dogs is "beef" not "mechanically separated chicken, pork and/or beef." The label specifies that only prime cuts are used — meaning prime rib, chuck, cross rib and brisket. The beef in question is from either the Von

or from Beretta Organic Farms in King City. "This hot dog is made from 'clean meat,'" says Von Teichman. "It's a product that moms can feel good about serving their kids."

Also noted on the Life Choices label: cultured celery extract and green tea extract is used as a preservative instead of sodium nitrite, a chemical powder.

"The government says you need some form of sodium nitrate and what everyone uses is sodium nitrite. It's a preservative and it's extremely cheap," says von Teichman, adding that opting for the natural route is 11 times more expensive.

Life Choices hot dogs hit the market in August 2010. The product quickly earned the

top online resources for moms.

"Although they taste like standard issue hot dogs, they are actually a lot better so moms don't have to feel guilty about feeding them to their kids," website co-founder Minnow Hamilton wrote in an email this week. "This is actually the first time we have endorsed a product with our stamp on the packaging."

Life Choices is selling about 3,600 packages (that's 21,600 hot dogs) a week at select supermarkets and health food stores in four provinces.

That's not bad for a package of six wieners that fetches about \$7.99 — double to triple the price of most of its rivals.



IAN WILLMS PHOTOS FOR THE TORONTO STAR

The beef in Matthew von Teichman's dogs