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Consumers shape chain's breakfast

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MEDICINE HAT, Alta. — When A & W asked consumers what they wanted in their eggs, it instead found out what consumers don't want.

They said they didn't want eggs from chickens fed antibiotics or animal byproducts.

In August, Canada's second largest burger chain launched Nature's Best to promote its use of eggs produced in compliance with those wishes.

"Our breakfast sales have grown in double digit percentages in the weeks since," said Trish Sahlstrom, the company's vice-president of purchasing.

A & W followed that with a promotion about its use of chicken raised without hormones and fed an all-vegetarian diet.

Chickens by nature are omnivores, and most egg producers do not use animal-derived protein in feed.

Finding supplies of eggs and chickens to meet those specifications was difficult but not as challenging as the search for beef, said Sahlstrom. Canadian producers were willing to provide the desired product.

Sahlstrom said the eggs, chicken and beef used in A & W food is more expensive, but sales have increased since the latest promotions began.