



Animal Welfare
Institute

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ANIMAL WELFARE INSTITUTE

A CONSUMER'S GUIDE TO FOOD LABELS AND ANIMAL WELFARE



● BEST CHOICES

Highest animal care standards, certified by a third-party auditing program.



Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW

Requires access to pasture or range for all animals. Beak trimming of poultry and tail docking of pigs and cattle prohibited; pain relief required for removal of horn buds of cattle. Producers must be family farmers.



Certified Grassfed by AGW

An optional, add-on to the Certified Animal Welfare Approved by AGW program. Requires that products come from animals fed a 100 percent grass and forage diet.



Global Animal Partnership (Steps 4, 5, 5+)

Rates producers on a 6-tier scale from low (Step 1) to high (Step 5+) welfare. Feedlots prohibited and access to pasture required for all animals at Step 4 and higher. All physical alterations prohibited at Step 5 and 5+.

● NEXT BEST CHOICES

Lower animal care standards, but certified by a second- or third-party auditing program.



AGA Certified Grassfed

Requires continuous access to pasture and a diet of 100% forage (no grain). Feedlots are prohibited.

Pain relief is not required for physical alterations such as removal of horns and docking of tails. No standards for the handling of animals during transport or at slaughter.



Certified Humane

Access to the outdoors is not required for meat birds, egg-

laying hens, or pigs, but indoor environmental enrichment must be provided for these animals. Feedlots permitted for beef cattle. Beak trimming of hens and tail docking of pigs are allowed under certain circumstances.



Food Alliance Certified

Access to the outdoors is not required for all animals. Animals may be subjected to physical alterations without pain relief. Compliance with 100% of standards is not required. Certification also covers treatment of workers and the environment.



Global Animal Partnership (Steps 2, 3)

For poultry and pigs, continuous indoor confinement (with enrichment) is allowed at Step 2. Limited access to the outdoors is provided at Step 3. Beak trimming allowed in turkeys, but tail docking of pigs is prohibited. Feedlots allowed for cattle at Step 2.



USDA Certified Organic

Genuine outdoor access not required for poultry (porches allowed), and vegetation not required for pigs. Cattle, sheep, and goats must have access to pasture. Pain relief not required for physical alterations such as removal of horns and docking of tails. The level of animal welfare varies widely among producers.

POTENTIALLY GOOD CHOICES

Relevant to animal welfare, but label not verified on the farm by a third-party audit. Actual animal welfare level may be high or low.

Cage Free (on eggs)

Hens are not in cages but are housed inside without outdoor access. Birds may have very little space and their beaks may be trimmed.

Free Range/Free Roaming

Animals are allowed access to the outdoors for a majority of their lives but size of outdoor space and amount of vegetation may be limited.

Grass Fed

Requires a diet of grass and forage, but animals may be confined to a feedlot. Antibiotics and hormones may be administered.

Pasture Raised

Generally indicates animals allowed regular access to pasture. Usually signifies a higher level of welfare, but label is not independently verified.

BEWARE OF THESE LABELS

Labels are meaningless or misleading in terms of animal welfare.

- Cage Free
(on meat chicken or turkey)
- Ethically Raised/Responsibly Raised/
Thoughtfully Raised
- Halal
- Humanely Raised
(without third-party certification)
- Kosher
- Natural
- Naturally Raised
- No Added Hormones
(on poultry, veal, or pork)
- Omega-3 Enriched
- UEP Certified (on eggs)
- USDA Process Verified
- Vegetarian Fed

MAKING BETTER FOOD CHOICES

- ✓ To give all farm animals a life worth living, people need to eat fewer of their products—that means less meat, dairy, and eggs.
- ✓ Ask your local supermarket to stock more welfare-certified products. Use customer comment cards and helplines to tell food retailers you care about farm animal welfare.
- ✓ While unverified claims aren't as reliable, choose these products over products without any welfare claims, as the animals were likely raised under conditions that are in some measure above typical factory-farm conditions.
- ✓ Shop at farmers markets and ask farmers how their animals are raised. Visit farms when possible.
- ✓ For more information see AWI's complete Food Label Guide at www.awionline.org/foodlabelguide.