



Animal Welfare
Institute

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October 2020



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. Cattle may be removed from pasture for feeding in a yard or lot. 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 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) allowed at Step 2. Limited access to the outdoors provided at Step 3. Beak trimming allowed in turkeys, but tail docking of pigs prohibited. Feedlots allowed for cattle at Step 2.



OPT Certified Grass-Fed Organic

Producers must meet all USDA Certified Organic standards for livestock health and living conditions and receive USDA certification. Standards also require providing a longer grazing period and a diet that consists of forage only, and they prohibit grains and grain-derived feeds.

● FAIR CHOICES

Relevant to animal welfare, but standards are weak.

American Humane Certified

Covers largest number of animals of any third-party program but the animal welfare standards are weaker, just slightly above conventional industry standards. Does not require compliance with 100 percent of its standards.

Global Animal Partnership (Step 1)

Standards for Step 1 are only marginally better than conventional industry standards. Environmental enrichment required for indoor-housed birds but not pigs. Beef cattle may be removed from pasture for feeding in a lot, and pain relief is not required for castration.

USDA Certified Organic

Genuine outdoor access not required for poultry, and vegetation not required for poultry or pigs. Pain relief not required for physical alterations such as removal of horns and docking of tails. Level of animal welfare varies widely among producers.

● 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)
- One Health Certified
- 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.