



**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 diet that is 100% grass and forage.



#### Certified Humane (Pasture-raised eggs only)

An additional certification to designate pasture-raised egg-laying hens. Requires 2.5 acres of pasture per 1,000 birds.



#### 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 Steps 5 and 5+.



#### Regenerative Organic Certified (other than dairy)

Requires USDA Organic certification and certification

from either Certified Humane, Global Animal Partnership (at Step 4 or higher), or Certified Animal Welfare Approved by A Greener World. Standards also include the treatment of animals during transport and at slaughter.



#### Vegan/Certified Plant Based

Vegan foods contain no products derived from animals. Certifications can help consumers easily identify

these kinds of products. Many foods without this claim are also vegan. When looking for a vegan product without a certification, avoid these ingredients: casein, gelatin, lard, tallow, and whey, among others.

## ● NEXT BEST CHOICES

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

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### Certified Humane

Access to the outdoors not required for meat birds, egg-laying hens, or pigs, but indoor environmental enrichment required. 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.

### 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. 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.

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### 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 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.

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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

- ✓ Consider a plant-based or vegan diet; keeping animal products off your plate is the only way to ensure that your food choices do not contribute to animal suffering.
- ✓ To help give all farm animals a life worth living, eat less meat, dairy, and eggs.
- ✓ Ask your supermarket to stock more welfare-certified products. Use customer comment cards to tell food retailers you care about farm animal welfare.
- ✓ Unverified claims are far less trustworthy, but may indicate that the animal-raising conditions were 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 [awionline.org/foodlabelguide](http://awionline.org/foodlabelguide).