



# What the labels on animal products really mean—and what they don't

HERE ARE SOME OF THE MOST COMMON TERMS AND WHAT THEY MEAN FOR ANIMAL WELFARE



**CERTIFIED HUMANE\*** The standards required under this program provide meaningful improvements over factory farms for how much space animals must be provided, as well as the quality of bedding material and enrichments. Animals are never confined in cages or crates and are free to display natural behaviors. They are not given growth hormones or antibiotics.



**GLOBAL ANIMAL PARTNERSHIP\*** This multiple-tier animal welfare program reflects stricter standards as the level number rises on a scale of 1 to 5. All levels prohibit the caging of animals and the use of growth hormones or antibiotics, and levels 2-5 require environmental enrichments such as perches for egg-laying hens. The higher the number, the better the living conditions are for the animals.



**USDA ORGANIC\*** Animals are provided with outdoor access, are raised in slightly more space than typical factory farms, eat organic feed and are not given hormones or unnecessary antibiotics. This seal does not tell a consumer anything about certain welfare concerns such as routine mutilations (castration, etc.) without pain relief.



**USDA CERTIFIED GRASS FED\*** Animals have unlimited outdoor access during the growing season and can only eat grass and forage, with the exception of milk before weaning. This term does not provide guidelines for other aspects of animal welfare, such as confinement outside of the growing season or the use of antibiotics and hormones.



**PASTURE-RAISED** Animals have continuous free access to the outdoors for a minimum of 120 days a year. The term does not define any standards for how much space each animal should be provided, nor the quality of the land accessible to the animals.



**FREE-RANGE** Animals are given access to the outdoors. The term does not define any standards for how much space per animal, frequency or duration of how much outdoor access must be provided, nor the quality of the land accessible to the animals.



**CAGE-FREE** On eggs, this term means chickens can move freely indoors with unlimited access to food and water during their production cycle. It does not define how much space each bird is provided unless accompanied by a third-party seal such as Certified Humane.



**HUMANELY RAISED** The USDA does not define this term, so it has little relevance unless accompanied by a seal from a third-party program.



**NATURAL AND NATURALLY RAISED** These label terms are not regulated and do not accurately convey anything about animal welfare.



**VEGETARIAN-FED** This term does not convey anything about animal welfare.



**HORMONE-FREE, RBGH-FREE, RBST-FREE AND NO HORMONES ADDED** These labels on dairy products mean the cows were not given artificial hormones to increase milk production. These practices do not have significant relevance to the animals' living conditions, and they are not relevant for chicken, eggs or pork, as producers are not legally allowed to use hormones.

## How you can help

- Add more plant-based meals to your diet to help reduce the demand for animal products.
- As you're reducing your meat consumption, make sure any animal products you do purchase come from companies or local farmers who use higher welfare practices.
- Share this article with others to help spread awareness about farm animal welfare.
- Support our work by using the envelope tucked inside this issue or donate at [humane society.org/keepfighting](https://www.humanesociety.org/keepfighting).



\*Verified by independent auditors



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