

UPDATED

# EWG'S MEAT AND DAIRY LABEL DECODER

Raising animals in factory farms threatens our health in many ways: by increasing the risk that our food will be contaminated with pathogens, by making our antibiotics less effective, and by worsening the air and water in nearby communities.

EWG's meat and dairy label decoder helps consumers identify food companies and farmers that raise livestock on pastures instead of factory farms, and that treat these animals humanely. Pasture-based livestock production has benefits for the environment when compared to factory farms.

**MANY CERTIFICATIONS ON MEAT AND DAIRY LABELS ARE MORE RELIABLE THAN OTHERS, SO KNOWING THE DIFFERENCE MATTERS.**





# MOST RELIABLE LABELS OVERALL



This certification verifies animals are raised on a pasture or range with the highest welfare standards in the U.S. EWG recommends choosing products with this certification.



This certification ensures that farm animals are raised according to strict animal welfare standards. EWG recommends picking Certified Humane products that also include “grass fed” or “pasture-raised” language on the label.



This certification is a tiered animal welfare program that evaluates and rates farming practices across six levels, from Step 1 (basic welfare) to Step 5+ (highest welfare). EWG recommends picking products at Steps 4, 5 or 5+.

Some of these labels might be familiar, like “free range” and “grass fed.” Others you might see for the first time, such as Animal Welfare Approved. But trying to decipher everything on a food label can be overwhelming – [EWG is here to help.](#)

Use our updated food label decoder to compare and contrast information found on labels at the supermarket for beef, chicken, dairy, eggs, pork and turkey. It’s a simple and quick way to make more informed decisions about what you’re buying and eating. Other tips include trying [EWG’s guide to plant-based recipes](#), and [consulting our tips](#) to reduce your diet’s climate footprint.

It’s available as a downloadable PDF that you can either save to your smartphone and use while shopping on the go, or click on to browse while you’re at the supermarket.



LABEL DECODER



# TURKEY

	ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED (AWA)	CERTIFIED HUMANE	GLOBAL ANIMAL PARTNERSHIP	AMERICAN HUMANE CERTIFIED	USDA ORGANIC	NATIONAL TURKEY FEDERATION	FREE RANGE	NO ANTIBIOTICS EVER	NATURAL
ADEQUATE INDOOR SPACE MINIMUM	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
OUTDOOR ACCESS REQUIRED	YES	NO	YES (STEPS 3 - 5+)	NO	YES (TEMPORARY CONFINEMENT ALLOWED)	NO	YES	NO	NO
ROUTINE ANTIBIOTIC USE PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
TOE-CLIPPING PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES (UNLESS WITH INFRARED AT HATCHERY)	NO	NO	NO	NO
BEAK-TRIMMING PROHIBITED	YES	NO	YES (STEPS 4 - 5+)	NO	YES (AFTER 10 DAYS OF AGE)	NO	NO	NO	NO
ON-FARM AUDITS REQUIRED	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
AUDIT TIMING	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY 15 MONTHS	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY YEAR	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
FACTORY FARMS PROHIBITED	YES	YES (IF ALSO "GRASS-FED" OR "PASTURE-RAISED" ON PACKAGE)	YES (STEPS 4 - 5+)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

LABEL DECODER



# CHICKEN

	ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED (AWA)	CERTIFIED HUMANE	GLOBAL ANIMAL PARTNERSHIP	AMERICAN HUMANE CERTIFIED	USDA ORGANIC	NATIONAL CHICKEN COUNCIL	FREE RANGE	NO ANTIBIOTICS EVER	NATURAL
ADEQUATE INDOOR SPACE MINIMUM	YES	YES	YES (STEPS 3 - 5+)	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO
OUTDOOR ACCESS REQUIRED	YES	NO	YES (STEPS 3 - 5+)	NO	YES (TEMPORARY CONFINEMENT ALLOWED)	NO	YES	NO	NO
ROUTINE ANTIBIOTIC USE PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
ON-FARM AUDITS REQUIRED	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
AUDIT TIMING	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY 15 MONTHS	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY YEAR	COMPANY DISCRETION	N/A	N/A	N/A
FACTORY FARMS PROHIBITED	YES	YES (IF ALSO "GRASS-FED" OR "PASTURE-RAISED" ON PACKAGE)	YES (STEPS 4 - 5+)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

LABEL DECODER

# EGGS



	ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED (AWA)	CERTIFIED HUMANE	GLOBAL ANIMAL PARTNERSHIP	AMERICAN HUMANE CERTIFIED	USDA ORGANIC	UNITED EGG PRODUCERS CERTIFIED	FREE RANGE	CAGE-FREE	NO ANTIBIOTICS EVER	NATURAL
CAGES PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO
ADEQUATE INDOOR MINIMUM SPACE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
OUTDOOR ACCESS REQUIRED	YES	NO	YES (STEPS 3 - 5+)	NO	YES (TEMPORARY CONFINEMENT ALLOWED)	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO
ROUTINE ANTIBIOTIC USE PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO
FORCED MOLTING PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
ON-FARM AUDITS REQUIRED	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
AUDIT TIMING	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY 15 MONTHS	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY YEAR	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
FACTORY FARMS PROHIBITED	YES	YES (IF ALSO "GRASS-FED" OR "PASTURE-RAISED" ON PACKAGE)	YES (STEPS 4 - 5+)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

LABEL DECODER

BEEF



	ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED (AWA)	CERTIFIED HUMANE	GLOBAL ANIMAL PARTNERSHIP	AMERICAN HUMANE CERTIFIED	USDA ORGANIC	AMERICAN GRASSFED ASSOCIATION	FREE RANGE	NATURAL	ORGANIC PLUS TRUST	GRASSFED
FEEDLOTS PROHIBITED	YES	NO	YES (STEPS 4 - 5+)	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	EFFECTIVELY	NO
ACCESS TO PASTURE REQUIRED	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES
GROWTH HORMONES PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES*	NO
ROUTINE ANTIBIOTIC USE PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES*	NO
DEHORNING PROHIBITED	YES	NO (PAIN RELIEF REQUIRED)	YES	NO (PAIN RELIEF REQUIRED)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO**	NO
DISBUDDING PROHIBITED	NO (PAIN RELIEF REQUIRED FOR HOT IRON CAUTERIZATION)	NO (PAIN RELIEF REQUIRED)	NO (STEPS 1 - 4: PAIN RELIEF REQUIRED FOR HOT IRON) YES (STEPS 5 - 5+)	NO (PAIN RELIEF REQUIRED FOR HOT IRON)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

LABEL DECODER

# BEEF



	ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED (AWA)	CERTIFIED HUMANE	GLOBAL ANIMAL PARTNERSHIP	AMERICAN HUMANE CERTIFIED	USDA ORGANIC	AMERICAN GRASSFED ASSOCIATION	FREE RANGE	NATURAL	ORGANIC PLUS TRUST	GRASSFED
TAIL DOCKING PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES (DAIRY CATTLE)  NOT SPECIFIED (BEEF CATTLE)	NOT SPECIFIED	YES	NO	N/A	N/A	NO**	NO
BRANDING PROHIBITED	YES (HOT BRANDING)  NO (FREEZE BRANDING)	YES (FACE BRANDING)  NO (BRANDS)	YES (DAIRY CATTLE)  YES (BEEF CATTLE: BRANDING STEPS 5 – 5+, FACE BRANDING ALL STEPS)	YES	YES (FACE BRANDING)	N/A	N/A	N/A	NO	N/A
ON-FARM AUDITS REQUIRED	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
AUDIT TIMING	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY 15 MONTHS	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY 12 - 15 MONTHS	N/A	N/A	ONCE EVERY YEAR	N/A
FACTORY FARMS PROHIBITED	YES	YES (IF ALSO "GRASS-FED" OR "PASTURE-RAISED" ON PACKAGE)	YES (STEPS 4 - 5+)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO



## LABEL DECODER

# DAIRY



	ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED (AWA)	CERTIFIED HUMANE	GLOBAL ANIMAL PARTNERSHIP	AMERICAN HUMANE CERTIFIED	USDA ORGANIC	NATIONAL DAIRY FARM PROGRAM
PASTURE ACCESS REQUIRED	YES	NO	YES (FOR 3 - 5+)	NO	YES	NO
ROUTINE ANTIBIOTIC USE PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES (FOR 3 - 5+)	YES	YES	YES
HORMONE USE PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
TETHERING PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO
TAIL DOCKING PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
DEHORNING PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES	NO (PAIN RELIEF REQUIRED)	NO	NO
DISBUDDING PROHIBITED	NO (PAIN RELIEF REQUIRED)	NO (PAIN RELIEF REQUIRED)	YES (STEPS 5 - 5+)	NO (PAIN RELIEF REQUIRED)	NO	NO
ANNUAL ON-FARM AUDITS REQUIRED	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO
AUDIT TIMING	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY 15 MONTHS	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY THREE YEARS
FACTORY FARMS PROHIBITED	YES	YES (IF ALSO "GRASS-FED" OR "PASTURE-RAISED" ON PACKAGE)	YES (STEPS 4 - 5+)	NO	NO	NO

## LABEL DECODER

# DAIRY



	AMERICAN GRASSFED ASSOCIATION	GRASSFED	FREE RANGE	HORMONE- FREE	NATURAL	ORGANIC PLUS TRUST
PASTURE ACCESS REQUIRED	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
ROUTINE ANTIBIOTIC USE PROHIBITED	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES
HORMONE USE PROHIBITED	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO	YES
TETHERING PROHIBITED	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
TAIL DOCKING PROHIBITED	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
DEHORNING PROHIBITED	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
DISBUDDING PROHIBITED	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
ANNUAL ON-FARM AUDITS REQUIRED	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES
AUDIT TIMING	ONCE EVERY 12 - 15 MONTHS	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	ONCE EVERY YEAR
FACTORY FARMS PROHIBITED	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

LABEL DECODER



# PORK

	ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED (AWA)	CERTIFIED HUMANE	GLOBAL ANIMAL PARTNERSHIP	AMERICAN HUMANE CERTIFIED	USDA ORGANIC	NATIONAL PORK BOARD PORK QUALITY ASSURANCE PLUS	FREE RANGE	NO ANTIBIOTICS EVER	NATURAL
GESTATION AND FARROWING CRATES PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
ADEQUATE INDOOR MINIMUM SPACE	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES (DEBATABLE)	NO	NO	NO	NO
OUTDOOR ACCESS REQUIRED	YES	NO	YES (FOR 3 - 5+)	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO
ROUTINE ANTIBIOTIC USE PROHIBITED	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	YES	NO
ROUTINE TAIL DOCKING PROHIBITED	YES	NO (BUT ONLY ALLOWED FOR PIGS LESS THAN 7 DAYS)	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
TEETH CLIPPING PROHIBITED	YES	NO (PERMITTED ONLY BY REQUEST FOR WELFARE RELATED REASONS)	YES	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
ANNUAL ON-FARM AUDITS REQUIRED	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO
AUDIT TIMING	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY 15 MONTHS	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY YEAR	ONCE EVERY THREE YEARS	N/A	N/A	N/A
FACTORY FARMS PROHIBITED	YES	YES (IF ALSO "GRASS-FED" OR "PASTURE-RAISED" ON PACKAGE)	YES (IF STEPS 4 - 5+)	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO

LEARN MORE

# EWG HAS MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MEAT & DAIRY

FIND OUT MORE [HERE](#)

