



Your guide to
humane shopping

World Animal Protection has created this guide to help consumers make an informed decision when grocery shopping. This guide was created with the information that was available at the time it was gathered. World Animal Protection does not endorse a specific label or producer and does not intend to vilify any either. Please use this guide as it was intended. World Animal Protection makes no guarantee to the completeness of the contents of this guide and shall not be held liable to any person(s) in regards to the information contained in this guide.

Cover image: Pigs shown in indoor pig farm in the UK which has high welfare birthing pens for sows.

Table of contents

Who is World Animal Protection	2
What animal welfare means	3
The Five Freedoms	3
Myths and confusing labels	4
Do farm animals in Canada receive antibiotics?	5
Do farm animals in Canada receive hormones?	5
What do the higher welfare labels mean?	8
Chicken	10
Turkey	12
Beef	14
Pork	16
Dairy	18
Eggs	20
What to ask your grocer	22
Notes	23

Together,

We are World Animal Protection.

We end the needless suffering of animals.

We influence decision makers to put animals on the global agenda.

We help the world see how important animals are to all of us.

We inspire people to change animals' lives for the better.

We move the world to protect animals.

Humane animal farming is better for everyone. Animals live longer, healthier and more active lives. Farmers can earn more too. So, we work with governments, farmers and consumers all over the world - campaigning for farm animals and working with businesses to show that farming can be sustainable and profitable



What does it mean when an animal has good welfare?

Ensuring every animal has a good quality of life, or a life worth living, is the essence of high animal welfare. A holistic view of welfare means the health and physical well-being of the animal is considered. It also means farming conditions provide for animals' ability to express natural behaviour and their need to socialize with other animals, to ensure their psychological well-being.

Welfare can be described as "high" if the animals are fit and healthy, feeling good and free from suffering.

Animal welfare ensures the Five Freedoms are met

- 1 Freedom from hunger and thirst** by access to fresh water and appropriate diet
- 2 Freedom from discomfort** by providing an appropriate environment including shelter and a comfortable resting area
- 3 Freedom from pain, injury or disease** by preventing or rapidly treating problems
- 4 Freedom to express normal behaviour** by providing sufficient space, facilities and company
- 5 Freedom from fear and distress** by ensuring conditions and treatment which avoid mental suffering

Myths and confusing labels

Label	Meaning
Natural, Farm Fresh and Farm-raised	There is no agreed upon definition for these terms when it comes to food labeling nor do they refer to a set of agreed upon standards.
Vegetarian Feed	Farm animals are sometimes fed animal by-products which is unappealing for some consumers. Some producers give their animals a diet of exclusively vegetarian feed. However, animals fed vegetarian feed could still be raised on factory farms unless the label also includes something about higher welfare.
Hormone-free	This means animals are not given any growth hormones. While added hormones can negatively impact animal welfare, those raised without hormones may still be kept in intensive, crowded conditions. Thus, this label does not guarantee higher welfare for animals.
Antibiotic-free	This means animals are not given antibiotics to prevent illness or promote growth. This is not a reliable indicator of animal welfare. While antibiotics should not be used to prevent illness or promote growth, it is important that sick animals are treated. Thus, this label does not guarantee higher welfare for animals.
Local or locally-raised	Locally raised is not a reliable indicator of animal welfare. What is important is the animal welfare practices on the farm regardless of geography as well as distance animals travel from farm to slaughter. While it's important to support local producers, look for those that are also raising their animals in higher welfare conditions.
Grass fed or grass finished	Beef cows may be raised on grass and feedlot or primarily on grass depending on the system. Grain is hard on the digestive system of cows so minimal diet of grains is preferred.

Do farm animals in Canada receive antibiotics?

In Canada, antibiotics are given to farm animals for two purposes, to treat sick animals, and to prevent illness and/or promote growth. Treating animals who are ill is considered good practice and important for animal welfare. However, certain antibiotics are also approved for routine use and are administered at low levels to prevent disease and promote growth. Since animals are kept in crowded conditions with poor air quality, they are more likely to get sick. An indirect effect to these low-level antibiotics is that they act as growth promoters.

Antibiotic use for these purposes are approved for beef, dairy cattle, chicken, egg laying hens, turkey, pork and fish. However, the industry no longer uses "Category 1" antibiotics – those that are critical for treatment of human diseases and where no alternatives exist. They are moving away from the use of other antibiotics for this purpose as well.

We believe that antibiotics should not be used as growth promoters or on a routine preventative basis to enable animals to be kept in poor welfare conditions, and instead the animals should be given healthier environments.

Do farm animals in Canada receive hormones?

In Canada, only cows are subject to hormones to accelerate growth (beef cows). It is unclear the full animal welfare impacts of using hormones as studies are scarce. Some of the implications are unnatural growth and side effects which include aggressiveness and nervousness. Studies have also shown chronic stress conditions.

To avoid products using additional hormones to increase growth, look for organic and other high welfare labels to ensure beef and dairy products are free from added hormones. In Canada, chicken, pigs and other animals are never administered growth-promotion hormones.

World Animal Protection believes that the use of growth promoting substances should be avoided.





What do the higher welfare labels mean?

Organic

- Producers meet animal health and welfare standards. They use 100 percent organic feed.
- The use of hormones for growth purposes and antibiotics are not permitted.
- Animals are given antibiotics as treatment when they are ill. In this case, milk producers must wait for a 30-day withdrawal period before milk can be marketed as organic. Meat animals given antibiotics cannot be marketed as organic and must be labeled as standard conventional meat.
- This label is Canadian government regulated and farms are regularly inspected.

Certified Humane

Humane Farm Animal Care (HFAC) is an international non-profit certification organization dedicated to improving the lives of farm animals in food production from birth through slaughter. The goal of the program is to improve the lives of farm animals by driving consumer demand for kinder and more responsible farm animal practices. When you see the Certified Humane Raised and Handled® label you can be assured that the food products have come from facilities that meet precise, objective standards for farm animal treatment.

- The producer meets Animal Care Standards and applies them to farm animals, from birth through slaughter.
- Animals are never kept in cages, crates, or tie stalls. Animals must be free to do what comes naturally. For example, chickens must be able to flap their wings and dust bathe, and pigs must have space to move around and root.
- Animals must be fed a diet of quality feed, without animal by-products, antibiotics or growth hormones.
- The strict use of antibiotics must only be administered under the supervision of a veterinarian when the animal is sick.

BCSPCA Certified

Administered by the BCSPCA. Standards are like Certified Humane and certified in Canada. Available in Western Canada.

Global Animal Partnership

GAP is a 5-step animal welfare rating program. Higher steps require farms meet stricter welfare standards. Lower steps (1-2) facilitate the transition of conventional farms to higher standards but allow some harmful practices during the transition. Each step builds on the progress made from the previous step. Farms are audited every fifteen months by a third-party certification company. GAP products are available at Whole Foods Market and are labeled according to the Step which reflect the conditions in which the animals were raised.

Step 1: No cages, no crates, no crowding

Step 2: Enriched environment

Step 3: Enhanced outdoor access

Step 4: Pasture-centered

Step 5: Animal centered; no physical alterations

Step 5+: Animal-centered, entire life on the same farm

Other labels

Grass finished, free range, cage-free



Chicken

	No cages, crates or crowding ¹	Enriched Environment ²	Outdoor access	Appropriate lighting ³
Organic				
Certified Humane				
BCSPCA Certified				
Free range				
Global Animal Partnership (GAP)	Step 1 and higher	Step 1 and higher	Step 3 and higher	Step 2 and higher
Free from antibiotics and hormones				

Standard chicken










¹ Birds have room to move around and express natural behaviours.

² Birds are provided with perches, hay bales or other forms of stimuli to satisfy their behavioural needs.

³ Natural light or artificial with a minimum of 6 hours of darkness in a 24-hour period.

Organic - Chickens must have free access to a wholesome diet with a feeding system. The feed is certified organic, free from antibiotics and includes supplements and vitamins. The farmers have a choice between natural or artificial lighting system but must adhere to at least 6 hours of darkness. The density allotment is a maximum of 21 kg/m² (approximately 10 grown chickens).

Certified Humane - A plan must be made available to ensure chickens always have enough space. The environment must be well ventilated with a low level of carbon dioxide and dust. Environmental enrichment is required. Chickens must have free access to a wholesome diet with a feeding system that prevent health problems. The density allotment is a maximum of 21 kg/m² (approximately 10 grown chickens).

Bedding (fresh, clean litter)	No animal by-products in feed	Restricted use of antibiotics	Requires slow-growing breeds
			
			
			
Step 1 and higher	Step 1 and higher	Step 5	Step 4 and higher
			









BCSPCA - Similar to Certified Humane.

Free range - The chicken must have access to the outdoors. The amount of time spent outside can vary depending on farm. No audit or verification system so conditions may vary.

Global Animal Partnership (Step 5) - Chickens spend their entire life on the farm. No overcrowding and always on pasture. Natural light is required.

Standard chicken - Chickens in a standard system are exposed to artificial light for 20 hours a day with no natural light and only 4 hours of darkness. Bedding and litter must be provided. No additional enrichments are required. And density is 31-38 kg/m² (approximately 19 grown chickens) which gives each chicken the room is the size of an iPad to move.

Turkey

	No cages, crates or crowding ¹	Enriched Environment ²	Outdoor access
Organic			
Certified Humane			
BCSPCA Certified			
Free range			
Global Animal Partnership (GAP)	Step 1 and higher	Step 2 and higher	Step 3 and higher
Free from antibiotics and hormones			

Standard turkey














¹ Birds have room to move around and express natural behaviours.

² Birds are provided with perches, hay bales, nest boxes or other forms of stimuli to satisfy their behavioural needs.

Organic – Turkeys must have free access to a wholesome diet with a feeding system. The feed is certified organic, free from antibiotics and includes supplements and vitamins. The farmers have a choice between natural or artificial lighting system but must adhere to at least 8 hours of darkness. The density allotment is a maximum of 26 kg/m² (approx. 2 full-grown turkeys per m²).

Certified Humane – A plan must be made available to ensure turkeys always have enough space. The environment must be well ventilated with a low level of carbon dioxide and dust. Enrichment must be provided. Turkeys must be provided with a diet designed to maintain full health and promote a positive state of well-being. The density allotment is a maximum of 36 kg/m².

BCSPCA – Similar to Certified Humane. Turkeys must receive a diet that is nutritionally balanced requirements or a qualified poultry nutritionist, free from contaminants, and provided in quantities that maintain health and vigor. The density allotment is a maximum of 26 kg/m² (approx. 2 full-grown turkeys per m²).

Appropriate lighting ³	Bedding (fresh, clean litter)	No animal by-products in feed	Restricted use of antibiotics
			
			
			
Step 1 and higher	Step 1 and higher	Step 1 and higher	Step 1 and higher
			














³ Natural light or artificial with a minimum of 8 hours of darkness in a 24-hour period

Free range – Turkeys must have access to the outdoors. The amount of time spent outside can vary depending on farm. No audit or verification system so conditions may vary.

Global Animal Partnership (GAP) – Turkeys must have free access to food during daylight hours. Natural light is required. Steps 1 & 2 – turkeys must be provided with a minimum of 6 hours of darkness. Step 3 and higher, turkeys must be provided with a minimum of 8 hours of darkness.

Standard turkey – Turkeys in a standard system are exposed to artificial light for 20 hours a day with no natural light and only 4 hours of darkness. Bedding and litter must be provided. No additional enrichments are required. The density allotment is a maximum of 40 – 65 kg/m² (approx. 5 full-grown turkeys per m²).

Beef

	No cages, crates or crowding ¹	Enriched Environment ²	Outdoor access
Organic			
Certified Humane			
BCSPCA Certified			
Global Animal Partnership (GAP)	Step 1 and higher	Step 1 and higher	Step 1 and higher
Grass finished or mostly grass fed			
Free from antibiotics and hormones			
Standard beef			












¹ Although in conventional production systems beef cows are kept outdoors, they must have adequate space to move around and not be kept in crowded areas to be considered higher welfare.

² Although cows are housed outdoors an enriched environment means they have space to move around and appropriate lying and shaded areas.

Organic – The certification requires that cows receive 30% or more of their diet in a pasture and at least 60% of their diet consisting of organic feed such as hay, fresh/dried coarse plant material. In terms of physical alterations, the organic standards do not speak to the absence of this practice. While pain relief is permitted, the scope of pain relief options is limited while staying Organic. Dehorning and branding are permitted but pain medication is required.

Certified Humane – The certified humane program has specific standards for cows to exhibit natural behaviour. Tie stalls are not to be used. They have free access to wholesome, nutritious feed, without the use of animal by-products. The use of supplemental hormones for growth is not permitted. Health plans must be in place for the cows including looking for signs of lameness and providing vaccinations to avoid diseases. Pain medication is a requirement.

BCSPCA – Cows must spend 2/3 of their life on the pasture. Fibre must be provided to maintain a healthy digestive system. Pain medication is recommended.

No animal by-products	Physical alterations prohibited ³	Two-stage weaning ⁵	Restricted use of antibiotics
			
			
			
Step 1 and higher	Step 5 ⁴	Step 5	Step 1 and higher
			

³ Beef cows are typically marked for identification purposes (branding), castrated and de-horned. All of these are highly stressful and painful procedures.

⁴ GAP standards permit de-budding/de-horning of cows at Steps 1-4 but require pain medication be administered.








⁵ Beef cows and calves remain together for several months during first part of their life. Abrupt separation at weaning causes both the mother and calf severe distress. Two-stage weaning allows the calf to see and smell its mother (usually through a fence). This has been shown to reduce stress.

Global Animal Partnership (Step 5) – Calves are raised with their mothers until weaned. The cows are raised in a pasture enriched environment. Antibiotics are only given when the animal is sick. Once labelled at Step 5, there are no physical alterations. Prior to Step 5, all producers are trained on physical alterations, including the administration of pain relief.

Grass finished or grass fed – Beef cows may be raised on grass and feedlot or primarily on grass depending on the system. Grain is hard on the digestive system of cows so minimal diet of grains is preferred.

Standard beef– All cows are kept outdoors but it is not a requirement. There is no set space allowance. All cows must be able to move freely around the pen and access feed and water. Tail docking, disbudding (removing horns on calf before they are attached to the bone tissue), tagging ears and branding is permitted and pain medication is not required. Dehorning is also permitted but pain medication is required.

Pork

	No cages, crates or crowding ¹	Enriched Environment ²	Outdoor access
Organic			
Certified Humane			
BCSPCA Certified			
Global Animal Partnership (GAP)	Step 1 and higher	Step 1 and higher	Step 1 and higher
Free from antibiotics and hormones			
Standard pork			









¹ Sows are not kept in sow stalls (gestation crates) but in group housing. Both sows and meat pigs are kept in small groups with space to move around.

² Enrichment for pigs includes straw bales, vegetables, toys (balls, traffic cones, rope), wallows and sprinklers.

Organic – Needs to meet the normal socialization and group housing requirement as well as provide outdoor pasture, sunlight and fresh air, weather permitting. Farrowing crates are permitted. Physical alterations are allowed only when necessary and pain medication is required.

Certified Humane – Outdoor access is not required for pigs, but enriched indoor housing is a requirement. Specific grouping is required to prevent aggressive behaviour. The sows must have access to nutritious feed. The sows must maintain a healthy body weight and cannot be too thin or too fat. They need to have adequate space to move around and be comfortable in their surroundings with the right floor and bedding. Sow stalls and farrowing crates are not permitted. The animals can exhibit natural behaviour and live a good life. Only castration is permitted, and medication is required.

BCSPCA – Outdoor access is required. Physical alterations are allowed only when necessary and pain medication is required. Ear-notching is not allowed.

Physical alterations prohibited ³	No animal by-products	Restricted use of antibiotics
		
		
		
Step 5	Step 5	Step 1 and higher
		












³ Pigs are typically castrated and tail-docked. Some are ear-notched (for identification purposes) and teeth-clipped. All of these are highly stressful and painful procedures.

Pasture raised/free range – The pigs can roam and forage in their natural environment. These labels are not readily available in stores and are mainly purchased directly from the farm.

Global Animal Partnership (Step 5) – No farrowing crates or gestation stalls. Enrichment items such as straw bales added to the group housing for rooting and exercise. Outside access all year round with added enrichments such as sprinklers. No physical alterations are permitted such as castrations and mutilations. Antibiotics administered when pigs are ill.

Standard pork – Sow stalls and farrowing crates are permitted. Outdoor access is not required. Multiple forms of enrichment is a requirement in for standard pork and social contact with other pigs is considered enrichment. Ear notching is permitted but must be done before 14 days of age, castration before 10 days old and tail docking before 7 days old. All require pain medication.

Dairy









	No cages, crates or crowding ¹	Enriched Environment ²	Outdoor access
Organic			
Certified Humane			
BCSPCA Certified			
Grass fed			
Standard dairy			

¹ Cows are not kept in tie stalls and are given enough space to rest and lie down comfortably, and to escape dominant cows.

² Cows must be provided with bedding, socialization opportunities, and increased space when housed indoors.

Organic – They use 100 percent organic feed, that can include grain. Dairy cows must graze during grazing season, depending on climate. Organic dairy farmers can only use antibiotics on their dairy cows therapeutically. Dehorning and branding are permitted but pain medication is required.

Certified Humane – The cows are not constrained by tie stalls and have access to the outdoors. A healthy diet is provided, free from antibiotics and growth hormones. If antibiotics are used when the dairy cow is sick, certain wait time is required prior to milking is allotted to ensure all the antibiotics is out of the system.

No animal by-products	No dehorning and branding ³	Restricted use of antibiotics
		
		
		

³ Cows are typically marked for identification purposes (branding) and dehorned. These are highly stressful and painful procedures.

BCSPCA – Similar to Certified Humane. Pain medication is required.

Grass fed – The dairy cows are given grass or forage diet for the lifetime of the cow, apart from consuming milk prior to being weaned. They have continuous access to pasture during grazing season, depending on climate. Antibiotics only used when cow is sick.

Standard dairy – Each producer has its own standards for animal welfare practices including outdoor access. All dairy cows require the use of pain medications for any branding, disbudding or dehorning. Teat removal is not permitted without the use of pain medication.



Eggs

	Lives cage-free	Can exhibit natural behaviour ¹	Access to nest boxes
Organic			
Certified Humane			
BCSPCA Certified			
Free-range			
Free run			
Furnished cage eggs			

Omega-3

Standard eggs

¹ Egg laying hens require nest boxes, perches, dust-bathing material to exhibit natural behaviour.

Organic – Producers meet animal health and welfare standards such as minimum space requirements and provisions for nest boxes, perches and litter. They use 100% organic feed and provide hens with access to the outdoors for a least 1/3 of their life, weather permitting.

Certified Humane – Free access to nutritious feed throughout each day is required. Area must allow hens to forage and dust bathe in a barn raised or free-range environment. At least one nest box for every 5 hens are provided. Perches must be provided. Outdoor access is required if the eggs are labelled "free-range".

BCSPCA – Similar to Certified Humane.

Free range – Free range hens are able to move freely within a barn and are given access to the outdoors, weather permitting. Standard practice is to provide nest boxes. Hens may also be provided with perches and litter.

Outdoor access	No animal by-products	Receive omega-3 feed	Restricted use of antibiotics
			
			
			
			
			

Free run – Hens can move freely within a barn and standard practice is to provide nest boxes. Hens may be provided with perches and litter.

Furnished cage eggs – Sometimes called “Nestaid” or “Comfort Coop Eggs” hens in furnished cages have access to nest areas and perches. Conditions are still crowded and do not allow for the opportunity to perform most natural behaviours.

Omega-3 – Hens are fed a diet that is supplemented with a source of omega-3 fatty acids, often flax seed. Omega-3 eggs are from caged hens unless specified on the label as coming from a caged-free system.

Standard eggs – Hens are raised in cages without access to nest boxes, perches or litter. Conditions are crowded and do not allow for the opportunity to perform natural behaviour.





What to ask

A good butcher should know the origin of their meat. It is reasonable to expect them to be able to tell you the name of the farm and where it is located, even if they buy through a local supplier (this is important as it means the animals were not transported long-distance). Consider these questions when you're out at your favourite restaurant too.



Specific questions

Do they have space to move around if kept indoors?

(Not crowded, no cages or crates)

Where is the farm located?

Are animals kept indoors or permitted outdoor access?

Are they housed in social groups?

Do the barns permit natural ventilation and natural light?

How far are the animals transported to slaughter?

Beef cattle

Are they grass fed?

If so, for what portion of their lives?

Are the cows grain finished or grass finished?

Chickens

Are they given outdoor access or do they have space and enrichment?

Where are they slaughtered and by what means?

Sows and pigs

Are they housed in groups and given enrichment or given outdoor access?

Are surgical procedures performed?

Dairy cows

Are they given outdoor access?

How are the calves dehorned?

Laying hens

Are the hens free run or free range?



Look beyond the labels

- 1 Demand better** – Look for the labels and if you don't see it ask for it.
- 2 Ask questions** – Ask your butcher, grocer and restaurant questions (see questions above).
- 3 Learn more** – Every label and producer are different, go to their website and find out their standards.
- 4 Share your views** – Tell your friends, share your comments
[@MoveTheWorldCA](#)
[#shophumane](#) [#eathumane](#)
- 5 Eat higher welfare and eat less meat, eggs and dairy overall.**
Doing so supports higher welfare farming and reduces demand for factory farmed meat.



Learn more at

worldanimalprotection.ca

 /WorldAnimalProtectionCanada  @MoveTheWorldCA

© World Animal Protection 2018.

World Animal Protection is a registered Canadian charitable organization.

No. 12791 9076 RR0001



CA0037/0918