

Meat and poultry raised responsibly

Meat and poultry have long been a popular mealtime choice with a majority of American consumers. To meet the demand, the meat industry has turned to agribusiness techniques that have raised questions about food safety, as well as concerns about the environment.

Fortunately, there are alternatives to commercial factory-farmed meats and poultry, and co-ops seek out responsible producers who can provide our customers the highest quality products that are raised in a humane environment. Food quality and safety are our first concerns.

Identifying meat raised responsibly

Co-ops seek to offer meat products that meet high standards for good taste, cleanliness and animal well-being. Often our staff members personally visit the farms and meat processing plants in order to evaluate humane treatment and sanitation techniques and to confirm a careful selection of the finished product.

In our stores, you will find a variety of meat and poultry products that meet the following criteria:

- Free from hormones, antibiotics or preservatives.
- Raised in clean and humane conditions, receiving adequate fresh air and space to move freely.
- Fed food that contains no harmful additives (routine antibiotics or animal by-products).
- Raised on small-scale family farms that follow sustainable and environmentally friendly practices.
- Certified organically-grown whenever possible.

If you are concerned about the condition of the farms as well as the quality of the meat from it, always ask! A reputable seller welcomes inquiries about its product line.

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StrongerTogether.coop is a consumer website developed by National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA) for our “virtual chain” of over 120 retail food co-ops, operating more than 160 store fronts, nationwide.

StrongerTogether.coop is a place for people to gather on their food journeys. It’s a place to find out more about what’s in your food, where it comes from, where to find great food, how to prepare it, and a whole lot more. It’s also a place to talk with others about food topics you’re exploring, are passionate about, and even want to get involved in.

Learn more about co-ops, and find food co-ops all across the U.S. at www.strongertogether.coop. Follow [@strongrtogethr](https://twitter.com/strongrtogethr) on Twitter and like us on Facebook; we’re at www.facebook.com/coop.strongertogether.

ALL ABOUT

Meat and Poultry



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Concerns about antibiotics in meat

There is growing concern over evidence that antibiotic use in animal feeds is causing antibiotics to lose effectiveness in fighting disease. A major source of antibiotic overuse is through livestock production, as up to 70 percent of the antibiotics used in America are routinely given to healthy chickens, pigs and cattle. Many of the antibiotics administered to animals are also used for treating human diseases, and those bacteria are becoming resistant to the antibiotics. People are at a greater risk of getting infections that are resistant to treatment. In the year 2000, manufacturers were ordered to discontinue using fluoroquinolone antibiotics in poultry as a way to address this health threat.

Concerns about mad cow disease

“Mad Cow” refers to the prion-based disease bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE). Scientists are still learning about prions, which are proteins that suddenly behave in destructive ways. Scrapie, Kuru, Creutzfeldt-Jacob Disease, and BSE are all prion-based diseases. Each of them affects the structure of brain tissue, and each is fatal and currently untreatable.

Scientists agree that BSE is transmitted among cattle by feeding them the body parts of other, infected cattle—a practice that was banned by the U.S. in 1997. But scientists don’t agree on the danger BSE poses to human health.

Certified organic and grass-fed are a customer’s safest beef choices. Your co-op’s beef buyers have lots of answers. They often speak to farmers directly and can answer questions about how your beef was produced.

Concerns about food-borne illness

Another food safety issue is the risk of consumers contracting food-borne illness. These risks range from the food the animals eat to the slaughter techniques used at factory farms: swift-moving conveyors move meats along at a rapid pace, hastening inspection, and the spread of bacteria is quick and widespread because of unclean practices. Two bacteria are a primary cause of food poisoning: Escherichia coli (E.coli), a strain of bacteria found in the stomachs and manure of beef cattle, and salmonella, which is found in the feces of poultry.

In the conventional meat industry, the poor production handling practices that cause some of these problems are not addressed. Keeping animals clean, feeding them high-quality food, and slowing down production lines in favor of thorough inspection are not considered cost-effective. Meanwhile, irradiation (exposing food to ionizing radiation to kill harmful bacteria) is touted as a solution, rather than cleaning up processing.

There are alternatives to this system. Look for meats that come from animals that are allowed access to movement and the outdoors, eat organically grown feed and are raised and processed in humane conditions. Well-fed and exercised animals are healthy and don’t require a routine of antibiotics to keep them well. Consumers must also participate in the food safety cycle by storing and cooking meats properly.

Proper handling of meat and poultry

- Refrigerate meat and poultry immediately upon purchase.
- Put meats on ice if transporting them in hot weather.
- Use within two days of purchase or freeze.
- Wash hands with soap and water before and after preparing meats or poultry.
- Wash all cutting boards, utensils and counters that have come in contact with raw meats.
- Keep cooked food refrigerated below 40°, or heated above 140° at all times to prevent bacterial spoilage.

NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS FOR LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY

All certified organic livestock and poultry, as defined by the United States Department of Agriculture final rule on organics, must:

- Include implementation of organic livestock plans, with sound management practices to promote animal health and well-being.
- Provide outdoor access for all animals and access to pasture for ruminants.
- Use 100 percent organic feed and approved feed supplements. Ruminants must get 30 percent of their dietary intake from pasture.
- Use organic management from the last third of gestation, birth or hatching.
- No antibiotics, growth hormones or GMOs.
- Implement organic handling plans for slaughter that emphasize protection of organic integrity, preventing commingling or contamination with nonorganic product, and proactively uses sanitation and pest management practices.

COMMON MEAT AND POULTRY LABEL TERMS



Organic

No antibiotics, growth hormones, GMOs, or irradiation. Organic feed only. Access to outdoors.

All-natural

Minimally processed. No artificial ingredients or added color.

Grass-fed or pastured

Natural diet of grass, may have some finishing with grain.*

Free-range or free-roam

Access to outdoors or pasture.*
Access to outdoors.

**Grass-fed and pastured are claims not verified by the USDA and do not yet have a standard meaning. To verify animal production claims, seek products that go through a third-party certification process or check with reputable sellers regarding the source of the product.*

Resources

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

1600 Clifton Rd., Atlanta, GA 30333
800-311-3435 | 404-639-3534 | www.cdc.gov

Food Alliance

1829 NE Alberta, Suite 5, Portland OR 97211
503-493-1066 | www.foodalliance.org

Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy

2105 1st Ave. S., Minneapolis, MN 55404
612-870-0453 | www.iatp.org

Organic Trade Association

PO Box 547, Greenfield, MA 01301
413-774-7511 | info@ota.com | www.ota.com

United States Department of Agriculture

Washington, DC 20250
www.usda.gov