

Consumer Reports®

Greener Choices
Food Safety and Sustainability Center

American Humane Association



LABEL REPORT CARD

How meaningful is this label? Somewhat meaningful	Is the label verified? Yes	Is the meaning of the label consistent? No	Are the label standards publicly available? Yes	Is information about the organization publicly available? No	Is the organization free from conflict of interest? Yes	Was the label developed with broad public and industry input? Yes
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LABEL CATEGORY:

Animal Welfare

WHERE YOU'LL FIND THIS LABEL:

FOOD

- BEEF
- DAIRY
- PORK
- POULTRY

WHAT THIS LABEL MEANS:

The American Humane Association label is designed to certify that farm animals involved in the production of dairy, eggs, poultry and beef are treated in a humane manner. The program is run by the American Humane Association, a not-for-profit organization founded in 1877. Livestock producers are third-party certified to a set of standards that encompass basic requirements, such as providing adequate food and clean water and ensuring that the animals are “free from pain and unnecessary stress.” However, many of the requirements in the American Humane standards mirror the conventional industry’s practices, and livestock producers do not have to meet all of the requirements to be certified.

The program does not require producers to meet certain requirements that consumers may expect from a welfare label, such as providing access to the outdoors, access to fresh air and indoor enrichment that relieve boredom and allow animals to engage in natural behaviors. The standards do not prohibit physical alterations such as teeth filing and tail docking of pigs or beak trimming of chickens.

The American Humane Association welfare program allows livestock producers to administer antibiotics to an entire flock or herd (at the discretion of the veterinarian — for example if at least one animal in the flock or herd is sick).

WHO VERIFIES THIS LABEL?

American Humane Association uses independent firms to conduct annual audits to ensure compliance with the standards. Auditors are compliant to ISO requirements and unannounced audits are possible.

CONSUMERS UNION EVALUATION:

How meaningful is the label?

Somewhat meaningful. The program's standards do require that livestock producers meet basic welfare requirements. But the American Humane Association program does not require certain standards that consumers are likely to expect from a welfare label, and producers can be certified without fulfilling 100% of the requirements. For example, there is no requirement for outdoor access, entire flocks and herds can be treated with antibiotics if at least one animal is sick. In this way, the overuse of antibiotics on healthy animals receiving antibiotics is possible. In addition, physical alterations such as tail docking and beak trimming are allowed.

Is the label verified?

Yes.

Is the meaning of the label consistent?

No. Producers do not have to meet 100% of the standards to be certified (producers need a score of 85%).

Are the label standards publicly available?

Yes.

Is information about the organization publicly available?

No. The organization does not disclose its funders.

Is the organization free from conflict of interest?

Yes.

Was the label developed with broad public and industry input?

Yes. The standards were developed initially in 2000 by a Scientific Advisory Committee, which consisted of practitioners, farmers and ranchers, academics and veterinarians. Today, the sixteen-member Scientific Advisory Committee continues to review and revise the standards. At their annual meeting, comments are invited from farmers/ranchers and the public. Some of the experts on the Scientific Advisory Committee did not believe that the standards were strong enough, and founded a separate animal welfare certification program (Certified Humane).

PROGRAM NAME:

Humane Heartland/American Humane Association

ORGANIZATION:

American Humane Association www.americanhumane.org

ORGANIZATION SUMMARY:

HISTORY

The American Humane Association is the oldest animal welfare organization in the United States, founded in 1877. Its mission is "to ensure the welfare, wellness and well-being of children and animals, and to unleash the full potential of the bond between humans and animals to the mutual benefit of both." In 2000, American Humane

Association created the American Humane Free Farmed program, a set of animal welfare standards that was the predecessor to the current American Humane Association certified program. The standards were developed by a Scientific Advisory Committee comprised mainly of academics and veterinarians, which still meets annually to develop changes and updates to the standards.

FUNDING

The American Humane Association is funded by individual donations, grants and fees from program participants who pay a “branding fee” based on the size of their operation. Identities of large donors are not disclosed publicly.

STRUCTURE

The label and certification program is managed by Humane Heartland, which is a program of the American Humane Association. Changes to the standards are developed and decided by the sixteen-member volunteer Scientific Advisory Committee which is comprised largely of academics and veterinarians.

LABEL STANDARDS:

humaneheartland.org/our-standards

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