

SAFE HANDLING OF MEAT AND POULTRY

Meat and poultry products are susceptible to contamination by bacteria that cause food-borne illness. Following food safety rules for handling, cooking and storage of meat is essential. Common steps when purchasing meat include:

- Place meat, even when wrapped, in separate plastic bags so meat juices do not cross-contaminate other items.
- Shop for meat and poultry last, before checking out, to minimize time out of refrigeration.
- Take meat and poultry items home directly after purchase and refrigerate, separated from other items, in the coldest part of your fridge.
- Use fresh products within 2-3 days or freeze.
- Thaw frozen meats in the refrigerator; if faster thawing is necessary, submerge in cold tap water. Cook meat immediately after defrosting in a microwave.
- Use dedicated surfaces and do not cross-contaminate with other foods.
- After handling, wash hands and contacted surfaces with hot soapy water.
- Marinate meats in the refrigerator and discard marinade after use.

Resources

American Grassfed Beef Association
www.americangrassfed.org

FDA Federal Food Safety Information
www.foodsafety.gov

Global Animal Partnership
www.globalanimalpartnership.org

United States Department of Agriculture
www.usda.gov

© 2015 National Co-op Grocers (NCG)



StrongerTogether.coop is a consumer website developed by **National Co+op Grocers (NCG)** for our “virtual chain” of over 140 retail food co-ops, operating more than 190 storefronts, 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.

Follow us @:

 facebook.com/coop.strongertogether

 twitter.com/strongertogether

 pinterest.com/strongertogether

 youtube.com/CoopStrongerTogether

ALL ABOUT

Meat and Poultry



Provided by your food co-op

www.strongertogether.coop

©2015, National Co-op Grocers (NCG)
Printed on elemental chlorine-free, 10% post-consumer recycled paper using soy ink.



Meat and poultry

often take center stage at meals, especially family gatherings, holidays and special events. Co-ops seek out responsible producers who can provide our customers with the highest quality, humanely raised meat and poultry. Food quality and safety are our primary concerns.

Identifying meat raised responsibly

In order to meet increasing demand while keeping costs down, the meat industry has developed a large-scale factory farm approach to raising animals, which has negative implications for animal welfare, the environment and human health. Co-ops seek to offer meat products that meet high standards for good taste, cleanliness and animal well-being. In many cases our staff members personally visit the farms and processing facilities in order to evaluate humane treatment and sanitation techniques and to confirm a careful selection of the finished product.

In our store we strive to carry a variety of meat and poultry products that meet the following criteria:

- Free from added hormones, antibiotics and preservatives.
- Raised in clean and humane conditions, receiving adequate fresh air and space to move freely.
- Fed food that does not contain animal by-products.
- Raised on small-scale family farms that follow sustainable and environmentally friendly practices.
- Certified Organic options available whenever possible.

Don't hesitate to ask questions if you are concerned about the condition of the farms or the quality of the meats! A reputable seller welcomes inquiries about its products.

Meat and poultry labels and certifications

Some common labels and certifications you will see in our meat department:



• Organic meat and poultry

U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Certified Organic meat and poultry meet strict requirements designed to promote animal health and wellbeing. These animals are raised without the use of antibiotics or growth hormones and must be fed 100% organic feed, with cattle receiving at least 30% of their diet from pasture. All animals must have regular access to the outdoors. Irradiation is not allowed for organic meat and poultry.

• Grass-fed beef

In order to meet USDA claim standards for grass-fed beef, cattle must be fed a diet exclusively of forage crops such as grasses and brassicas during the growing season, and hay and grain-free silage when forage is unavailable (winter). Grass-fed meats and poultry are higher in omega-3 essential fatty acids (EFAs) and generally leaner than grain-fed alternatives.

• Free-range or free-roaming poultry

To label poultry as free-range or free-roaming, the USDA requires that animals have access to the outdoors. It does not specify for how long or for what percentage of the day. All USDA regulations around free-range and free-roaming apply exclusively to poultry.

• Pasture-raised

Pasture-raised is an unregulated term that producers use to refer to animals that enjoy unrestricted access to the outdoors. The term was developed in part to distinguish the difference between free-range as the USDA defines it and the more liberal access to pasture some small-scale producers allow their animals.

• All-natural

The USDA defines "natural" as minimally processed and/or without artificial ingredients. The label must specify which it is.

Common concerns about meat & poultry

• Antibiotics

There is growing concern over evidence that antibiotic use in animal feeds is causing antibiotics to lose effectiveness in fighting disease¹. A major source of antibiotic overuse is through livestock production, as up to 70% of antibiotics used in the U.S. are routinely given to chickens, pigs and cattle. The administration of these antibiotics is largely necessary due to factory farming, a practice which creates an environment wherein it is difficult to maintain the health of animals. Animals raised under healthier conditions do not need routine (daily) administration of antibiotics. The USDA allows beef to be labeled as "antibiotic-free" only if sufficient documentation is available to prove the claim.

¹ "Phasing Out Certain Antibiotic Use in Farm Animals," FDA, www.fda.gov/forconsumers/consumerupdates/ucm378100.htm



• Growth hormones

According to the FDA, natural and synthetic hormones are routinely administered to beef cattle to promote rapid growth and lean meat. Steroidal hormones are not permitted for use in any animals other than beef and dairy cattle². Recombinant bovine growth hormone, or rBGH is a non-steroidal hormone used on dairy cattle that is legal for use in the U.S. but is banned in the European Union and Canada, among other countries.

• Nitrates and nitrites

These chemical compounds are a normal part of the diet and are even found in some vegetables, such as celery and spinach. Processed meat products often contain synthetic sodium nitrate and potassium nitrite as preservatives. Although some studies have potentially linked nitrates and nitrites to certain types of cancer, they are not currently classified as carcinogenic by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)³.

² "Steroid Hormone Implants Used for Growth in Food-Producing Animals," FDA, www.fda.gov/animalveterinary/safetyhealth/productsafetyinformation/ucm055436.htm

³ "ToxFAQs for Nitrates and Nitrites," Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry, CDC, www.atsdr.cdc.gov/toxfaqs/tf.asp?id=1186&tid=258

