



MARKETING LABELS & VOLUNTARY CERTIFICATIONS

OTHER COMMON LABELS

ANTIBIOTIC FREE

“Raised without antibiotics,” “no antibiotics administered,” or similar terms means the animal has not received any antibiotics over its lifetime. The USDA only approves the use of the term “no antibiotics added,” though sufficient documentation must be provided to demonstrate this. This label can apply to all animal products including meat, milk, and eggs, though all eggs are generally antibiotic free since antibiotics decrease egg production.

CAGE FREE

This term can be applied to eggs and poultry and indicates that the hens or meat birds were not confined to cages during their lifetime. This can mean the birds were allowed to roam a barn, poultry house, or otherwise, and had unlimited access to food and fresh water. This term does not mean the animals had access to the outdoors. The use of this term is not verified except in the case of eggs that are also USDA Grade Shield marked.

FREE RANGE

This term refers to eggs and poultry that were allowed to roam freely in their lifetime, had unlimited access to food and freshwater, and continuous access to the outdoors. USDA Grade Shield marked eggs with this claim will be verified, otherwise there is not regulatory oversight for this term use on eggs. For poultry products, the USDA only requires that outdoor access be made available for an “undetermined period each day.”

FRESH

This term is used on poultry products to indicate that the meat was never cooled below 26° F. Labeling of this term on poultry products is regulated by the USDA’s Food Safety and Inspection Service.

The USDA does not define or regulate the use of the term “fresh” on any other product types.

GRASS-FED

“Grass-fed” means that an animal was fed solely grass or forage for the duration of its life after weaning. This label also requires that the animals have continuous access to pasture during the growing season. Small and very small cattle operations can be certified as grass-fed through the USDA Grass-fed Program.

HORMONE FREE

Hormones are not allowed to be used in the raising of pork, poultry, veal, or exotic meats, so “hormone free” is not permitted for use in these products. “Federal regulations prohibit the use of hormones” is allowed. There is not restriction on hormone use for beef and dairy cattle, so a “hormone free” label on these products indicates the animal was raised without the use of synthetic hormones. See “rBGH and rBST” below. The USDA regulates use of this term.

NATURAL

When used on meat and poultry products, this term is regulated by the USDA and requires that the product does not contain artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives and is minimally processed. There is no regulatory force for the use on this term for dairy products, eggs, or non-animal food products.

PASTURE RAISED

“Pasture-raised,” “pastured,” or “pasture fed” all mean that animals spent at least some time outdoors on pasture, feeding on grass or forage. However, there are no government standards for this la-

bel, including how much of its life the animal spent on pasture.

PESTICIDE FREE

This term implies that the food was raised without the use of pesticides. However, there is no regulatory force for use on this term. There are certifications, including Certified Organic, that prohibit the use of pesticides and regulate use on the terms.

RGBH-FREE/RBST-FREE

These labels, used on dairy products, are regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). The label ensures that the dairy cows were raised without the use of the hormone recombinant bovine somatotropin (rBST), also known as recombinant bovine growth hormone (rBGH). All products with this claim must also include the statement "No significant difference has been shown between milk derived from rbST treated and non-rbST treated cows" as required by the FDA.

UNSPRAYED

This term, along with "no spray," is used on non-animal products to imply they were grown free of pesticide or herbicide use. This term is not regulated by any agency and does not have any implications on the use of soil applications, seed treatments, or otherwise.