

GIMMICK or GOOD?

WHAT LABELS ON CHICKEN REALLY MEAN

“FREE RANGE”

- >1% of chickens nationwide are “free range”
- **No** official federal gov’t definition for “free range”
- USDA allows “free range” label if chickens have **access** to the outdoors
 - Most **prefer to** stay close to water & feed in the chicken house
- “Organic” labeled chicken must also be “free-range,” but not all “free-range” chicken is “organic”

“NO ANTIBIOTICS EVER” OR “RAISED WITHOUT ANTIBIOTICS”

- Typically only appears on one of a company’s product lines
- “No antibiotics” labels indicate those birds were raised without administration of any antibiotics at any time prior to harvest
- “No antibiotics” labels indicate birds that are successfully raised without antibiotics
- Chickens that are treated with antibiotics do not qualify for a “no antibiotics” label
- The FDA requires all chickens given antibiotics must go through specific withdrawal periods before leaving the farm
- Extensive monitoring and testing programs by the FDA and USDA ensure all chicken and meat at the grocery store **does not** contain antibiotic residues

“NO ADDED HORMONES”

- No artificial/added hormones are used in **any** U.S. poultry
- FDA regulations **prohibit** the use of artificial/added hormones
- **Any brand** of chicken can be labeled “raised without hormones” / “no added hormones”
- Any chicken package labeled “raised without hormones” / “no added hormones” must include a disclaimer statement that the “USDA prohibits the use of **added hormones** in **any poultry**”

“RAISED CAGE-FREE”

- Broilers are raised in large, open barns
- All chicken you buy from a store is raised cage-free, whether it is labeled “cage-free” or not

“FARM RAISED”

- **All** chickens are raised on farms
- **Any** chicken could be labeled “farm-raised”
- Usually refers to chickens raised on a **local** farm

“ORGANIC”

National Organic Program (NOP):

- Requires “**organic**” poultry **never** receive antibiotics
- **All** organic farm animals are:
 - **Treated** with antibiotics
 - **Sent** into conventional production
 - **Do not** bear “organic” label

“NATURAL”

USDA regulations:

- **No** artificial ingredients
- **No** coloring ingredients
- **No** chemical preservatives
- Minimally processed

“ALL-VEGETABLE DIET”

- All U.S. animal feed is regulated by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO)
- **Poultry feed** is made primarily from corn and soybean meal
- Chickens are omnivores, not vegetarians
- Some processed protein, fats and oils are sometimes included
- Feed from companies choosing not to use these ingredients could be described as “**all vegetable**”

“MADE IN THE USA”

- **Nearly all** chicken products sold in the **U.S.** come from chickens hatched, raised and processed in the U.S.
- Very few chicken products are imported from Canada, which has food safety and quality standards equal to the U.S.

“GLUTEN-FREE”

- Fresh, single ingredient chicken is always naturally gluten-free.
- Gluten is the protein that occurs naturally in wheat, rye, barley, and crossbreeds of those grains
- Foods that are gluten-free may not necessarily be labeled “gluten-free,” because the FDA does not require such labeling

