

Suggested Action Steps

1. **The most important step you can take is to stop eating factory-farmed meat.** It might not seem like much, but stores sell only what people will buy. Small health-food stores and food co-ops are more likely to carry humanely raised meat. When enough people (and, therefore, stores and restaurants) stop buying factory-farmed meat, the system will change. You vote with your fork every time you put food in your mouth.
2. **Ask questions:**
 - Ask the places where you shop if they sell humanely raised meat, and if not, ask them if they would.
 - Ask restaurants if they cook with humanely raised meat, and if not, ask them to do so.
 - At farmers markets, ask farmers about the living conditions of their animals and try to arrange to visit farms to see them for yourself. Support farmers who are making the transition to more humanely raised meat. Many small-scale farms are doing their best to work towards this goal, and they need our support.
3. **Be suspicious of labels.** Animal Welfare Approved, a standard set by AGW (A Greener World), is the only certification that currently ensures high standards for humane treatment. Many other labels have no clear legal definition and are grossly misleading. Lack of oversight lets companies apply nice-sounding labels such as “certified humane” and “pasture-raised” on packages of meat from animals raised in conditions of abuse only slightly different from those of a factory farm. Even the “organic” certification for meat can be problematic as it doesn’t address animal welfare. Visit Farm Forward’s Animal Product Labeling Guide for the story behind the labels you see on meat products or Consumer Report’s Guide to Food Labels.
4. **Try not to waste meat.** If an animal died to feed us, the least we can do to honor that sacrifice is to nourish our bodies with the meat, not throw it away. Of all the meat that Americans buy, twenty-two percent is discarded, mostly because people think it has gone bad because they misunderstand labels. “Use by” and “best by” dates suggest peak quality. They do not mean that meat is bad past those dates. The easiest and fastest way to tell if meat is bad is to smell it: the scent of fresh meat is barely perceptible. Rancid meat, on the other hand, has a nasty, unpleasant smell and should not be eaten. Here are three other changes to stop waste—they just take a bit of planning.
 - Encourage your family to plan menus so all meat purchased is eaten.
 - Freeze meat before it spoils if it isn’t going to be eaten right away.
 - Store leftovers from a meal and eat them later.

Where to Find Ethically Raised Meat

- Find Humane is a website and app that lets you search for humanely raised animal products near you including meat, skin care, leather, and pet food. It features a searchable map and directory of over 50,000 stores, farms, and delivery options across the U.S. and Canada. www.findhumane.com
- A Greener World, which lists Certified Animal Welfare Approved sources of meat, maintains a website that promotes and supports sustainable farming practices benefiting people, animals, and the environment. www.agreenerworld.org/certifications/
- The Eat Well Guide® is an online directory of restaurants, farms, markets, and other sources of local, sustainable food throughout the United States. Standards for inclusion include farming techniques that protect the environment, public health, human communities, and animal welfare. Search by ZIP Code. www.eatwellguide.org
- Local Harvest is a national directory of family farms and farmers markets along with restaurants and grocery stores that feature local foods. www.localharvest.org
- EatWild is an online resource for pasture-raised meat on small family farms listed by state. It also lists farms that will ship to your home. www.eatwild.com
- The American Grassfed Association is devoted to promoting the grass-fed industry. They have a list of producers by state, though not as comprehensive as EatWild's. www.americangrassfed.org

Remember, when you first make a significant change in how you eat, it is easy to get discouraged; the first steps are always the hardest. Remember the saying, “Don’t let perfection get in the way of progress.” We all face situations where the options for food are limited, or someone has made us a special meal and we are pretty sure it is with factory-raised meat. Then, we might make the choice to eat meat that we ordinarily would not. Just keep coming back to thinking about the animals. Cultivate gratitude and respect toward the animals that give us the gift of their lives for our food.

Every time you explain why you refuse to eat factory-farmed meat, you educate the people around you about how you think animals should be treated. So, help spread the word. Every individual person’s decision is important. You can make a difference—one bite at a time!

Eating is a political act. Choosing food that is produced with animals’ and people’s welfare in mind is like voting for a better farm and food policy. I encourage those who have the means to choose ethically raised meat, even if it costs a bit more, as every purchase helps support humane farming practices and moves us toward a better food system for all. Right now, farm-raised meat is more expensive because it reflects the true cost of raising meat. Small-scale farmers are not being subsidized by our government, even as they are doing the important job of providing healthy alternatives to factory-raised meat. They need our support!