

Understanding labels

Eggs



HEALTHIER FOOD » PURCHASING GUIDANCE

This vetted list of criteria meets the definition of sustainable eggs for Health Care Without Harm and Practice Greenhealth. Health care facilities should consider purchasing eggs from free-range or pasture-based systems and regional suppliers directly to support the regional economy and reduce the reliance on eggs raised in environments associated with social justice and animal welfare concerns. Recent science reveals that moderate whole egg consumption is not likely to lead to an increased risk for cardiovascular disease and mortality for the general population. Eggs have low environmental impacts associated with their production compared to other animal products.

THIRD PARTY CERTIFICATIONS

Third-party audited, transparent guidelines, standard attributes

Certified Organic	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the system -- responsible land management required • No antibiotic use, no animal by-products • No cages, humane living conditions
Animal Welfare Approved	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the system – responsible land management required • No routine antibiotic use, no animal by-products • No cages, highly humane living conditions • All animals have pasture access • Small flock size required
Certified Humane	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No routine antibiotic use • No cages, humane living conditions • A free-range and pasture standard is available for certification, but the basic standard is cage-free
Food Alliance Certified	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the system – responsible land management required • No routine antibiotic use, no animal by-products • No cages, humane living conditions
Biodynamic	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the system – responsible land management required • All farms must first comply by USDA Organic standards • No antibiotic use, no animal by-products • No cages, highly humane living conditions • All animals have pasture access • Focus on mixed systems

Global Animal Partnership



Step 1 & 2

- No antibiotic use, no animal by-products
- No cages, basic humane living conditions
- Step 2 also includes: enrichments provided

Step 3

- No antibiotic use, no animal by-products
- No cages, humane living conditions
- Some outdoor access

Step 4

- No antibiotic use, no animal by-products
- No cages, high humane living conditions
- Pasture-focused living

Step 5 & 5+

- No antibiotic use, no animal by-products
- No cages, humane living conditions
- Pasture-focused living; hens only allowed to be housed during extreme weather
- Step 5+ also includes: hens stay on-farm their entire lives, including slaughter

ADDITIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

The following certifications address important sustainability considerations but do not meet our criteria by themselves. Look for these certifications in conjunction with the above accepted third-party certifications.



Non-GMO Project verified

The farm's production of eggs does not use genetically modified livestock or feed.



Salmon Safe

The farm's production practices are verified to protect salmon streams from farm runoff through soil, water and vegetation management.

CLAIMS NOT ACCEPTED

“Cage-free”

- Hens are not confined to cages.
- USDA graded eggs marketed as “cage-free” must meet USDA standards for cage-free.
- “Cage-free” does not mean the hens have access to outdoors.
- It's best to buy from certified sources with a cage-free or free-range standard.

“Free-range” or “free-roaming” and “pasture-raised”

- Generally is meant to mean the animals have access to outdoors, but there is lack of agreement in the market on the definition of this term.
- It's best to buy from certified sources with a free-range standard.

“Hormone-free”

- Hormones are never allowed in egg production

“Natural” or “all natural”