



## 1. How was the animal raised? On pasture, indoors, confined? Was it caged?

Studies are starting to show that the animals healthiest for you are those raised on pasture, so you ideally want to find poultry raised outdoors in their natural state.

If you live in a cold part of the country, that might not be feasible, so you want to find poultry raised humanely indoors. The chickens should not be overcrowded and should have access to outdoors. What's important are the number of animals raised together, the size of the space they live in, and if they are provided straw and other items they would naturally have access to outdoors.

Egg-laying hens in factory farms spend their life crammed inside cages where they can't even spread their wings. Raising poultry in any type of cage is unsustainable and should be avoided.

## 2. How much time do the hens spend outdoors each day?

There's a big difference between an animal that's permitted access to outdoors for 10 minutes a day as opposed to an animal that spends 10 hours, or its whole life, outdoors. Ideally, you are looking for an animal that spends a significant amount of time outdoors in the natural environment, though you do need to factor in the part of the country you live in.

In cold or very hot climates, or places where there are cold winters or hot summers, you might need to look at how humanely the animals are raised, and whether they ever get time outdoors. Ideally, the animals should have

continual access to both indoors and outdoors, where they can choose. The farmer should be able to explain to you why s/he raises the animals the way that they do – you should feel comfortable with their explanation if they are raising their animals sustainably.

## 3. Was the hen force molted?

Molting is the process where a chicken replaces its old feathers with new ones – it's a natural process that happens every year.



Forced molting is a process where hens are not given any food from 5 to 14 days. This forces their bodies to produce more eggs. Forced molting is inhumane and unsustainable. You should avoid eggs from chickens that were raised this way.

## 4. What was the hen fed?

Sustainable poultry eat grasses, greens, grains and insects, whereas factory farm poultry are fed animal byproducts such as bone, feathers, blood, manure and animal parts, as well as grain, arsenic, mineral and vitamin supplements, enzymes, and antibiotics. If the farmer tells you that the feed was supplemented with anything, dig further to find out exactly what the supplements are.

## 5. Was the hen fed antibiotics?

Some consumers only want poultry that has never received antibiotics; others are comfortable eating poultry that was treated with antibiotics only when the birds became sick. Any animal given a low dose of antibiotics



in order to promote growth and/or ward off disease is being raised in a factory farm system and should be avoided.

**Note on Hormones** – By law, hormones cannot be given to poultry. But animals can be fed growth enhancers and feed additives in order to make the poultry grow faster. These additives are not considered hormones, but there is concern that they might affect human health. It is best to find farmers who do not feed their animals any hormones, growth enhancers or any type of chemical feed additives.

You also might want to ask if animal protein was fed as an additive or as part of their diet. (Poultry are meat eaters – they eat bugs and insects - so they can be fed animal protein on both sustainable and unsustainable farms.) What you are concerned about is if any of the animal protein fed to poultry contains hormones. If a chicken or turkey is fed beef or a beef byproduct, that beef could conceivably contain hormones – this is one way hormones are thought to be getting into the poultry supply. It is uncertain whether this type of hormone transmission is affecting human health, so you must decide whether or not this is important to you.

**NOTE:** Sustainable farmers are very open about how they raise their animals – If you're not on their farm asking these questions, ask to visit and see exactly how the animals are raised. The vast majority of farmers would love to have you stop by for a visit! Alternatively, if your meat came from a company that distributes products raised by family ranchers, ask for their written protocol (the standards for exactly how the animal was raised). If they won't, you might want to think twice about buying their products.