



1. How was the hog raised? (pasture, indoors, proper bedding, etc.)

Ideally, you are looking for a hog that was raised outdoors on pasture and in fields. In some areas of the country, the weather is too cold to permit constant access to outdoors. Pigs in these areas should have comfortable barns or sustainable structures like hoop houses where they have space to carry out their natural behaviors, such as rooting and nesting, and they should be provided proper bedding materials such as straw. They should also have the ability to go outdoors should they wish to.

2. Where did its mother and father live?

One of the most troubling aspects of factory hog production is the treatment of pregnant sows (female pigs) and the boars (males) that breed them. They may spend their entire lives in “farrowing pens” (small crates with metal bars) too small to turn around, standing on slatted floors, with every natural instinct to build nests and nurture piglets thwarted. So even if those piglets are eventually taken to a satisfactory environment, raised “free-range” or the like, you’ll want to be sure they weren’t born in one of these industrial facilities.

3. How much time do the animals spend outdoors each day?

Having “access” to outdoors isn’t good enough – some companies have interpreted that as a small opening out onto a concrete patio. Find out if the hog goes out into the fields or onto pasture, and ask how much time a day the animal spends there. There’s a big difference between 4 minutes and 4 hours.

4. What was the hog fed?

Sustainable hogs root in the dirt and eat roots and bugs, as well as food such as corn, soy, vegetables and vegetable peelings, extra dairy products, and

table scraps. An ideal system is where a family farm raises the grain and soybeans fed to the animals. Factory farm hogs are mostly raised on corn and soy, and this can be supplemented with bakery products, limestone, fishmeal, copper, choline chloride, antibiotics, blood cells, and sodium selenite, among other things.

5. Was the hog ever given antibiotics?

Some consumers only want pork from animals that never received antibiotics; others are comfortable eating pigs that were treated with antibiotics only when the animals became sick. Any animal given a low, daily dose of antibiotics in order to ward off disease is being raised in a factory farm system and should be avoided.

6. Were hormones or feed additives given to the hogs?

By law, hormones cannot be given to hogs. But animals can be fed growth enhancers and feed additives in order to make the animals 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 type of 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. (Hogs are meat eaters, so they can be fed meat on both sustainable and unsustainable farms.) What you are concerned about is if any of the animal protein fed to the hogs contains hormones. If a hog 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 pork 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.