

# Grass or Grain-Fed, Free Range and Pasture-Raised

What's the difference between grass or grain-fed, free-range, or pasture-raised when it comes to beef cattle and poultry? It can be confusing and advertising can be misleading. Read on to learn the difference.

## Grass-Fed or Pasture-Raised

Grass-fed is also referred to as pasture-raised. For beef cattle, this means the cows live on grass without supplementation from grains of any kind. In the winter months, they live on hay which is just grass in a dried state.



Pasture-raised or grass-fed cows

Poultry that is pasture-raised refers to those that have

outdoor access to scratch and peck at grass and bugs but shelter from hot sun, cold or wet weather. They are also supplied with feed. In other words, they are allowed to roam (somewhat) freely to do what comes natural to them.



Free-range chickens

# Grain-Fed Issues

Grain-fed refers to the cattle and poultry that are raised on grain alone.

The problem for cows lies in the fact that they ([like many humans](#)) cannot properly digest grains which causes numerous health issues. The reason for this is because cows are [ruminants](#) meaning their digestion process requires a fermentation stage.

The big issue for massive, grain-fed poultry stations is the lack of space for the birds to spread their wings, literally. Chicken and eggs sold in stores may claim to be “cage-free” but that doesn’t necessarily indicate they are raised humanely.

In fact, large grain-fed cattle and poultry stations are known to support inhumane practices too. Too often cattle and poultry are packed like sardines into a small area.

Animals fed corn as the grain leads to a whole other problem as corn is highly linked to [GMO issues](#).

Then you have individuals like myself who are allergic to wheat. It took me years to figure out why I react to some [eggs](#) but not others.

## Hybrids

Some cattle start off grass (pasture) fed but then end up receiving grains to fatten them up for market. This is referred to as “finishing.” Done humanely, (without overcrowding) this should not be a deal breaker.

You may not care whether your beef, poultry, or eggs are grass or grain-fed, free-range or pasture-raised. Educate yourself on the difference and you may just start caring.

These pictures were taken at my [uncle's farm](#) where their cattle and chickens are grass-fed or pasture-raised. I love to visit this childhood-invoking farm with my grandchildren.