



Animal Welfare APPROVED

newsletter
FALL 2013 • Volume 6 • Issue 3

All Natural Farms

HUMANELY RAISED • ANTIBIOTIC FREE



In this issue

What labels mean...
and what industry
wants you to think
they mean

PORTERHOUSE STEAK, BEEF

UNIT PRICE \$	SELL BY
\$4.69/lb	
TOTAL PRICE \$	
\$5.25	

KEEP REFRIGERATED OR FROZEN

7 53162 43612 8

SAFE HANDLING

THIS PRODUCT WAS...

Dear Friends,



By linking farmers and consumers, Animal Welfare Approved continues to drive a truly market-based solution to the ills caused by factory farming and misleading marketing. We're proud to be in a position where we don't charge farmers to participate in the program. But we're no label of convenience.

We make no apologies for the robustness and integrity of our standards and auditing procedures. When consumers see the AWA logo, it's an assurance that the food has real integrity, and that our farmers truly are farming the way they say they are. We're proud to be the best in the business, and to work with the best in the farming business, too.

Yet none of us can rest on our laurels. Consumer interest in high-welfare, sustainable food is rising. In response, the number of food labels and programs claiming to deliver such foods has risen, too. But some of these claims are highly dubious (see page 3). Producing the best quality products—and communicating exactly why you are different to others—will become increasingly important.

With this in mind, it's critical for everyone in the program to display their AWA logo with pride, and to help promote the program at every opportunity. Whether it's on your signage or packaging, or on your website, you've earned the right to use it. We can supply anything from signs to stickers to website logos. We can even design new food labels for free. If you are interviewed by the media please mention your AWA certification and why it matters to you and your customers.

By working together, we can ensure that AWA products continue to build a presence and an awareness that drives true and lasting change in the market place.

Andrew Gunther
Program Director



Animal Welfare APPROVED newsletter



5



6



12



15

contents

Fall 2013
Volume 6 • Issue 3

2 DEAR FRIENDS Letter from Andrew Gunther	6 COVER FEATURE The Power of Food Labels
3 TOP NEWS New Food Labels Exposed App from AWA	10 GUIDANCE Hosting Farm Visits
AWA Offers New Grassfed Certification in Canada	12 TECHNICAL Planning for Breeding
4 NEWS IN BRIEF AWA Grants Deadline, Lab Burger, Cheese Award Winners, and more	14 NOTES FROM THE FIELD A Question on Markets
5 PROFILE Meet Randall Bock of Bock Industries	15 MEET THE FARMER Luke Meerman of Grassfields Cheese
	16 AWA SERVICES Sign Up for Our Monthly E-News Update

Cover Photo: Feedlot in Colorado (Kendra Kimbirauskas/
Socially Responsible Agriculture Project)

Contents Photos: AWA's Tim Holmes and Randall Bock, Bock Industries (Frank Morison);
Woman shopping (iStock); Calves at Rare Earth Farms, NC (Mike Suarez); Cheese at
Grassfields Cheese, MI (Grassfields Farm).

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New Food Labels Exposed App from AWA

AWA has launched a new app to help consumers decipher some of the most common terms and claims found on today's food packaging and restaurant menus.

BY PETER MUNDY, WRITER/EDITOR

Help is at hand for people who want to navigate the bewildering sea of terms and claims made about our food, thanks to a new app from AWA.

Available for both iPhone and Android devices, AWA's free *Food Labels Exposed* app allows today's consumers to browse over 80 common food terms and claims while they are shopping or eating out, and provides succinct, clear, and factual definitions for each entry.

"Building on the remarkable success of our *Food Labeling for Dummies* guide, this new app offers the same useful information, but in an immediately accessible format," says Andrew Gunther, AWA's Program Director. "From 'Natural' and 'Humane' to 'Cage Free' and 'No Antibiotics,' our free *Food Labels Exposed* app allows you to read food labels with confidence, knowing you have all you need to make informed choices."

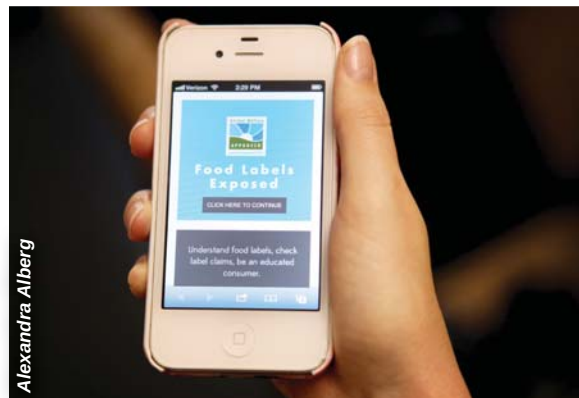
AWA's *Food Labels Exposed* app provides a fully-searchable list of the most common food label terms and claims. Where a term or claim is legally defined or regulated, the app provides an official definition—citing the official

source. However, if a term or claim is not regulated or legally defined, the app gives the user an unbiased definition of the term or claim, and what to watch out for.

User-friendly icons help the consumer quickly evaluate the validity of any claim, and whether it has been independently verified or not. Similarly, a range of simple filters enables the consumer to select the issues that they care about most—such as animal welfare, environmental protection, or supporting independent family farms—so they can easily identify the terms and claims that matter to them.

"Sadly, even as consumer concern about the negative impact of intensive farming on our health and the environment has grown, so too has the number of unscrupulous food manufacturers, producers, and marketers that are willing to make intentionally misleading health, animal welfare and environmental claims," says Gunther. "In a free market, the freedom of choice ultimately begins with the freedom of information."

Smartphone users can download the new app from Apple's App Store or from Google Play. Search for "Food Labels Exposed." 🐾



With over 80 searchable definitions, AWA's free *Food Labels Exposed* app will help conscientious consumers make informed food purchases.

AWA Offers New Grassfed Certification in Canada



AWA is introducing the first and only food label in Canada that guarantees food products come from animals fed a 100 percent grass and forage diet and raised entirely outdoors on pasture or range.

The new Animal Welfare Approved Grassfed program is the result of consumer and farmer demand in Canada for a label that will distinguish authentic grassfed products in a confusing marketplace, where the term "grassfed" is not legally defined. With annual, independent, on-farm audits to ensure compliance with strict production standards, the program will enable high-

welfare, 100 percent grassfed farms to clearly differentiate their products.

Located near Hanna, Alberta, 10,000-acre TK Ranch is the first farm or ranch to certify under the new program: "We're proud to be Canada's first ranch to achieve AWA Grassfed certification for our beef and lamb," says Colleen Biggs. "This new program gives Canadian consumers a grassfed label they can truly trust."

For more information about the Animal Welfare Approved Grassfed label, visit AnimalWelfareApproved.org/standards/awa-grassfed.

AWA GRANTS DEADLINE

October 1 is the closing date for proposals for AWA's 2013–2014 Good Husbandry Grants.

Now in its sixth year, the Good Husbandry Grants program has funded well over 100 projects to improve farm animal welfare. Funding priorities for this cycle include improved genetics, increased outdoor access, welfare improvements in the slaughter process, and non-lethal predator control.

AWA-certified farmers (and those who have submitted an application for AWA certification) can apply for up to \$5,000 toward on-farm projects. Slaughter plants working with or seeking to work with AWA farmers are also eligible to apply. For further details, visit AnimalWelfareApproved.org/farmers/grants-for-farmers or contact Emily Lancaster at Emily@AnimalWelfareApproved.org or (202) 618-4497.

CHEESE AWARD WINNERS

AWA farms made their mark at the American Cheese Society awards, held in August in Madison, WI.

Green Dirt Farm, MO, took home no fewer than five awards for their cheeses and sheep's milk yogurt, with two first place category wins for "Dirt Lover" and "Fresh Plain" cheeses, second place for "Fresh Rosemary" cheese and "Just Plain Yogurt" yogurt, and third place for "Fresh Garlic & Peppercorn" cheese. Consider Bardwell Farm, VT, also won second place for their "Rupert" raw cow's milk cheese, while Sequatchie Cove, TN, won third place for their "Dancing Fern." The competition was the largest ever, with 1,794 different products entered. Visit cheesesociety.org.

LAB BURGERS ON THE MENU?

The world's first laboratory-grown hamburger was cooked in front of television cameras at a media event in London in August.

The burger is the culmination of a five-year science experiment, at a cost of \$325,000. It consisted of thousands of individual strands of laboratory-grown muscle fibers, grown over a three-month period from cattle stem cells in

a solution of bovine fetal serum and antibiotics, collected and frozen until sufficient quantities were available to form the single patty. Red beet juice and saffron were added for color.

Speaking at the event, Chicago-based food writer, Josh Schonwald—one of two selected tasters—said "the bite feels like a conventional hamburger" but that it tasted "like an animal-protein cake." The project's lead scientist, Professor Mark Post, described the outcome as "a very good start" but estimated that commercial production of cultured meat on any scale was still 15–20 years away.

NEW SLAUGHTER FACILITY IN GA

Savannah River Farms, GA, has received approval by the USDA as an on-farm slaughter and processing facility for red meat. The company is now offering its services to other AWA farmers for cattle and pigs, minimizing transport distances to slaughter.

"The main reason we built our facility was that we raise our animals caringly and we wanted the end of their lives to be as humane as possible," says Kellie Deen, of Savannah River Farms. "We're getting calls from other farmers who are interested in having us process for them so their meat products can cross states lines, which our USDA approval will permit." For more information call (912) 856-0107.

BUTCHER SHOP SAYS 'ONLY AWA'

Red Apron Butcher, Washington, DC, is the first butcher shop in the U.S. to source 100 percent AWA hogs for its two stores in the DC area.

"AWA's standards are the highest, and we are committed to providing the best products available to our customers, so it's a perfect fit," says Red Apron Butcher's owner, Nathan Anda. "But it's also important to me that AWA's certification services don't cost the farmer anything, so they are available to even the smallest producer." Visit redapronbutchery.com.

CONSERVATION RECOGNITION

Frances Huber of Brush Creek Farm, NC, has earned Runner-Up in the 2013 North Carolina Outstanding



David Parry/PA Wire

Grown in-vitro from cattle stem cells, the world's first lab-grown meat burger was cooked at a news event in London.

Conservation Farm Family award. Huber is the first individual woman to earn the Runner-Up award, which recognizes her dedication to the environment and wildlife protection.

STRAIGHT TO THE SOURCE

Doug Haines of Haines Farms, MO, who keeps a flock of pastured laying hens, was interviewed by Fox 4 News Kansas City in June in a televised feature about the benefits of buying directly from local farms, where families can come out and select their own food.

GOOD GRAZIN'

Andrew Chiappinelli, owner of Grazin' Diner, NY—the first Animal Welfare Approved restaurant—was featured in a video blog by *Huffington Post* writer, Liza de Guia.

"It's an artificial cheapness that's associated with meat in America," said Chiappinelli during the interview. "I'd rather you spend your money on a good burger and just do it less frequently."

FARM AID HERO

Kevin Jablonski, fourth-generation owner of AWA-certified Mack Brook Farm, NY, was the featured Farmer Hero for the month of July on the Farm Aid website. See farmaid.org.

For more local, regional and national news coverage of AWA farmers and ranchers, visit AnimalWelfareApproved.org.

The Right Tools For The Job

Randall Bock of Bock Industries has developed a dedicated range of lightweight, efficient, and cost-effective dispatch tools for euthanizing and slaughtering poultry on-farm.

As an engineering firm, Bock Industries first became involved in manufacturing tools for livestock euthanasia in 2011. We were approached by a large agricultural business with a prototype tool for euthanizing sick or injured turkeys. Beginning with this prototype, our challenge was to further develop the technology and manufacture a tool to improve on current euthanasia methods, while ensuring operator safety and achieving consistent and humane results. One of our driving concerns was supporting the improvement of the public's perception of any culling or slaughter operation. It was the start of a fascinating journey for our business.

Consumer interest in food and farming is growing rapidly, and animal welfare—how animals are raised and slaughtered—is a key area of concern. While certain traditional euthanizing and slaughtering methods still used on some farms are considered “technically humane” when carried out properly, the graphic nature of techniques such as blunt force trauma are often aesthetically offensive and archaic to the general public.

Using our engineering expertise, Bock Industries examined numerous methods for euthanizing poultry. Our goal was to utilize available modern technology to develop and manufacture a suitable alternative. We knew, for example, that captive bolt technology is being used with considerable effectiveness in some processing plants for stunning large livestock, but that the devices were generally cumbersome and/or very expensive. Could we devise a suitable alternative?

Our research ultimately led to the development of the TED—a lightweight, hand-held unit specifically designed to stun and dispatch poultry in a single operation using a non-penetrating captive bolt system. Inspired by hand-held nail gun technology, the TED is powered by a small propane canister and battery, making it entirely portable. We soon began selling units to large U.S. poultry operations, as well as to customers in Canada and the UK. We have also recently started manufacturing the Zephyr-E, through technology transferred to us from the University of Guelph in Canada. The Zephyr-E requires a pneumatic source of 120PSI, making it ideal for use at permanent slaughter



Frank Morison

AWA's Tim Holmes tests the cordless, gas-powered TED captive bolt tool at Bock Industries.

stations. Both devices are lightweight and highly efficient, being ready for reuse immediately after the trigger has been pulled. With correct training, both tools are 100 percent effective, resulting in immediate insensibility and rapid death for all poultry species.

Although the TED and Zephyr-E were originally designed as culling devices for corporate agricultural clients, we were delighted when AWA representatives contacted us earlier this year. AWA is reviewing high-welfare euthanasia and slaughtering tools that are suitable—and cost-effective—for small to medium farm businesses. After much discussion and testing, we are pleased to offer the TED and Zephyr to AWA-certified poultry farmers at a further discounted rate, enabling them to slaughter and process their birds on-farm according to the highest welfare standards.

In the next few years we are going to see a dramatic increase in demand for high-welfare products. There is no going back on animal welfare now that consumer awareness has been ignited. We're looking forward to supporting AWA family farms in meeting this future demand. 🐷



For more information on Bock Industries—and the TED and Zephyr-E captive bolt dispatching tools—call (814) 342-4385 or visit www.bock-industries.com.

The Bock Industries TED (far left) and Zephyr-E (left) are available to AWA farmers for \$950 (saving \$71) and \$675 (saving \$53), respectively. Prices include shipping.

THE POWER OF A FOOD LABEL



Gpoint Studio

BY CHRISTINA A. ROBERTO & DANIEL E. BRADLEY,
HARVARD SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH.

The labels on today's food packaging can influence not only our perception of the foods we purchase, but can also have a significant influence on our behavior—and even our physiology.

You're in the supermarket, buying cereal. You've heard breakfast is the most important meal of the day, and you want your family to eat healthy. You pick up a box that says "fiber" on it. The package says this cereal has 50 percent of your daily fiber needs, though you're not sure how much that means you'd actually have to eat. Two bowls, maybe? Well, 50 percent is better than nothing. And it has "whole wheat." That's good, right?

But wait—what's the difference between whole wheat and whole grain? Are they the same thing? Either way, it sounds like it is good for you. Plus, the package says the cereal is "all natural." Natural is good. But does natural mean healthy? What about the cereal box next to it: that one has no high fructose corn syrup and says it's a good source of vitamin D. Kids need vitamins, so maybe you should buy that one instead?

INFORMATION OVERLOAD

Even an educated and nutrition-conscious shopper can quickly get overwhelmed by what ought to be a simple task: deciding what to eat. Yet that daily chore seems more difficult than ever, despite apparent efforts to make it easier. The venerable Nutrition Facts Panel—that black and white box with all the numbers about calories and servings—is still there for guidance on the packaging. But it has been joined by endless health claims on the front of the package: "trans fat free," "sugar free," "high fiber," "heart healthy," "all natural," "low fat," "immunity boosting," "whole grain," "organic," "gluten free." The list goes on and on. The more people grow concerned about health problems associated with obesity, like diabetes and heart disease, the more these labels will multiply. But is there a reason to worry about all these nutrition labels? How much do they really influence us? Science suggests quite a bit. In fact, labels on food packaging not only influence people's perceptions of foods, but they can also influence our behavior—and even our physiology.

FOOD LABELS AND PERCEPTIONS

Food labels that tout the health attributes of packaged foods are a concern because of the health halo these labels create. A health halo is the ability of a label to give an overall impression that a product as a whole is healthy, even when that's not necessarily the case. Two researchers, Pierre Chandon and Brian Wansink, have developed studies that show this phenomenon at work with restaurant foods. In one

research study, they showed people three different sized meals from McDonald's and Subway. Although the meals of each size contained the exact same number of calories, people estimated that the Subway meals had fewer calories than the McDonald's meals. This misperception highlights Subway's success in creating a health halo by marketing themselves as a healthy fast food restaurant.

Health halos can also be generated by labels on packaged foods. Take the organic label, for example. Organic labels don't just appear on fruits and vegetables, but are now routinely found on a wide range of packaged foods as unexpected as gummy fruit snacks and cookies. Nutrition aside, there are many reasons to want to buy foods made with organic ingredients, but there's no evidence organic packaged foods are nutritionally superior to their non-organic counterpart products.

Nevertheless, the organic label can have a powerful influence on people's perceptions of foods. This is well illustrated in a study conducted by Jonathon Schuldt and Norbert Schwarz. They showed that undergraduates believed Oreos cookies made with organic flour and sugar were lower in calories than non-organic Oreos, and it was viewed as more acceptable to eat the organic version more often. The health halo didn't stop there. Participants in a second study read a short story describing a woman who wanted to lose weight eating a healthy dinner. They were either told the woman had no dessert, an organic dessert, or a non-organic dessert after dinner. When asked how acceptable it was for the woman to skip her usual evening run, the results revealed the participants thought this was more acceptable when the woman ate an organic dessert versus a non-organic dessert.

Words aren't the only aspects of a label that can influence a consumer. Even something as subtle as a label's color can have an impact. In another study by Jonathan Schuldt, he found people thought a candy bar was healthier when the front-of-package nutrition label displayed on it appeared in green, instead of red. This is concerning since the recent industry-developed Facts Up Front front-of-package nutrition labels appear in green on many candies.

FOOD LABELS AND BEHAVIOR

Labels not only influence our perceptions of products, but they can also impact our eating behavior. In another study by Brian Wansink and Pierre Chandon, half of the participants were given a bowl of M&Ms labeled as "regular" and half were given a bowl labeled as "low fat." The two bowls were otherwise identical. The researchers found that people ate 28 percent more M&Ms when they were labeled as low fat. This effect was most pronounced among overweight participants, who ate 47 percent more of the "low fat" M&Ms. If the M&Ms had truly been low fat, the benefit of choosing them instead of regular M&Ms would have been diluted by this compensatory eating. This means that, if the goal is to eat less, labeling packaged foods as healthy when the food is actually relatively unhealthy can actually encourage people to eat more of the food than they otherwise would.

People also tend to assume if one food is healthier than another, the healthy food will be less filling. This was demonstrated in a study by Stacey Finkelstein and Ayelet Fishbach. They asked participants to taste a chocolate raspberry protein bar. Half the participants were told the bar was healthy and half were told it was tasty. Those who were given the "healthy" bar reported more feelings of hunger after eating the bar, relative to those who thought they were eating a "tasty" bar.

But the influence of these labels goes further. In a follow up study, half of participants were given bread they were told was "nutritious, low fat, and full of vitamins" and the other half were given the exact same bread, but told it was "tasty, with a thick crust and soft center." When pretzels were offered as a snack to participants after they ate bread, those who tasted the bread presented as "healthy" ate more pretzels than those who ate "tasty" bread. The label not only changed their perceptions, but it changed their behavior: they ate more calories later.

FOOD LABELS AND PHYSIOLOGY

Labels have the power to influence our perceptions and behaviors, but perhaps even more fascinating is that they can influence our physiology, too.

In one study conducted by Alia Crum and colleagues at Yale University, researchers brought individuals into a lab to drink milkshakes. The participants were given identical milkshakes, but half received a milkshake labeled as a sensible choice, while the other half received a milkshake labeled as an indulgent choice. As expected, participants rated the sensible shake as healthier than those viewing



the indulgent shake. In this study, however, the researchers didn't only measure perceptions and behaviors. They also measured participants' physiological response to drinking the shake by using blood samples to look at levels of appetite-regulating hormones, including ghrelin, a hormone released by the body to signal hunger and motivate eating. Surprisingly, they found that ghrelin response differed based on the milkshake's label. Those drinking the sensible shake had a dulled ghrelin response, indicating that participants were not as satiated after drinking the shake they thought was healthier, compared to the indulgent shake. A simple label changed people's physiological reaction to the product.

REDUCING CONFUSION

All of this research suggests that efforts are needed to reign in potentially misleading labels and claims. One way to help consumers navigate these complex food packages is with a front-of-package food labeling system that provides easy-to-understand nutrition information. Clear, accessible, accurate labels can educate shoppers and encourage better food choices.

Having a uniform, front-of-package food labeling system makes sense. It's an obvious way to provide shoppers with important nutrition information about what they're buying. But in the U.S., the number of front-of-pack nutrition labels has increased dramatically and, unlike health claims like "low fat," or "high in fiber," these labels have no government oversight. Recently, labels have also migrated off packages and onto store shelves via shelf-tag systems, as retailers have developed their own nutrition labels or licensed third-party labeling systems because they believe helping consumers navigate the supermarket aisles gives them a competitive advantage. For example, one U.S. supermarket chain, Hannaford Brothers, uses the Guiding Stars system that rates the nutritional value of a food or beverage from zero to three stars. Whole Foods Market puts Aggregate Nutrient Density Index (ANDI) scores on shelves.



The food industry's new Facts Up Front labeling system, which appears on many food products, has already come under fire.

The result is a proliferation of disparate labeling systems, each designed by entities with their own priorities and perspectives. These front-of-package labels can cause information overload when combined with health claims, details on special offers, sponsorships, and other branding efforts. Although some of the labeling systems being used might be sound in design and useful to consumers, a better approach would be to have a single, uniform nutrition labeling system that's consistent across products and stores.

Several years ago the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) undertook an initiative to determine what an optimum front-of-package labeling system should look like. The Institute of Medicine published two reports on the topic, which recommended a front-of-pack labeling system that would use a 0–3 star (or similar symbol) system to rate products based on their healthfulness—more stars would be given to healthier products. However, in advance of these recommendations, which have not been implemented, two of the food industry's largest trade groups (the Food Marketing Institute and Grocery Manufacturer's Association) announced a new labeling initiative: Facts Up Front. This front-of-package labeling system is already appearing on many food products in the U.S. But if the goal of front-of-package labels is to provide consumers with accurate and accessible information, Facts Up Front falls short.

First, it's dense with information, listing information about calories, saturated fat, sodium, and sugar per serving combined with grams/milligrams for each nutrient and percent daily values. Second, companies can cherry-pick up to two "nutrients to encourage" to include on the label, such as potassium, fiber, or vitamins. This creates an incentive to fortify less healthy foods to boost their shelf appeal. This small symbol also appears in one predominant color, making it hard to compete with the other colorful and attention-grabbing aspects of food packaging. In a study we conducted at Yale University's Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity, consumers reported that the Facts Up Front label was dense with information, confusing, and took too much time to understand.

Approaches to front-of-package nutrition labeling taken outside the U.S. suggest the promise of other possibilities. Australia has recently approved a government-endorsed system that gives a summary rating of up to five stars, in half-star increments, with separate icons for calories, saturated fat, salt and sugar. The food industry has been given two years to voluntarily adopt this labeling approach. Similarly, the international Choices Programme is used in the Netherlands and other countries. This is a check mark label that appears on foods and beverages meeting specific nutrition criteria determined by an independent scientific committee.

A number of food manufacturers in the UK have agreed to use a government-endorsed traffic light labeling system that shows separate values of red, yellow, or green for the levels of fat, saturated fat, sugar and salt in products.



In the UK, the government-endorsed traffic light label is widely regarded as an intuitive and accessible information system.

The traffic light approach is simple and intuitive. It not only provides the consumer with information, but it can serve as a cue or reminder about nutrition goals and one's desire to eat healthfully. The traffic light makes use of the associations we already have between red and stop and green and go. This type of approach to food labeling could also be especially effective at motivating companies who want to avoid a red light on their foods to offer healthier products.

AN IDEAL FRONT-OF-PACK LABEL

Labels matter. They can be an important and cost-effective tool for public health when done well. Consumers are most likely to benefit from a single, uniform front-of-package nutrition label. Any labeling system adopted should be simple and avoid overloading consumers with too much information. A useful labeling system would not just provide consumers with numeric information, but translate that information in an intuitive and meaningful way (for example, through "traffic light" iconography). Of course, any front-of-pack labeling system must also be based on sound nutrition criteria.

In addition to motivating consumer behavior change, disclosure of information is a way to motivate industry changes. For example, the implementation of New Zealand's Heart Foundation Tick symbol was accompanied by the removal of 33 tons of salt from the food supply over a one-year time period. Levels of trans fat in products dropped after the U.S. mandated disclosure of trans fat on food packaging, and companies in the Netherlands have reformulated food products following the introduction of the Choices Programme.

Retailers requiring companies to disclose information can also have a big impact. For example, Whole Foods Market recently announced that all products sold in their stores must be labeled according to their GMO status by early 2018; food companies will have to respond. This, of course, highlights that the nutritional value of a product is not the only label that matters to consumers. The production

of food is related to many important ethical issues that consumers care about, including sustainability practices and the treatment of animals during the production of the food.

Regardless of what information is communicated to consumers, every effort should be made to ensure people are not misled about the food they are buying and what they put in their bodies. A label is, after all, not just a label, but a powerful tool to shape consumer perceptions, behavior, and even our biological responses.

Christina A. Roberto, Ph.D., is a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Health & Society Scholar at the Harvard School of Public Health (see peachlab.org). Daniel E. Bradley is the Director of Communications for the Psychology of Eating and Consumer Health Lab at the Harvard School of Public Health. 🍷

AWA HELPS CONSUMERS SEE WHAT'S REALLY BEHIND THE LABELS

More and more food labels making health, animal welfare or environmental claims. The problem is that some of these label claims are highly misleading—and often deceiving.

AWA's *Food Labels Exposed* app (see page 3) is available for both iPhone and Android devices and allows consumers to browse over 80 common food terms and claims while they are shopping or eating out.

Smartphone users can download AWA's new *Food Labels Exposed* app from Apple's App Store or from Google Play. Search for "Food Labels Exposed."



Deceptive marketing: All meat birds are raised cage-free, and hormones are prohibited in raising poultry. Consumers reading this label, however, are meant to believe the company is making special concessions to animal welfare.

HOSTING FARM VISITS

Every year, hundreds of thousands of people visit farms across the U.S. and Canada. It's a fantastic way to educate and inform the public—but where do you start?

BY PETER MUNDY, WRITER/EDITOR

Hosting farm visits can be highly rewarding for farmers, offering a unique opportunity to educate people about the benefits of high-welfare, sustainable farming. Farm visits can also help build better links with your local schools and communities—and potentially broaden your customer base.

PLANNING THE VISIT

If you're thinking about hosting a farm visit, start small and learn from others. Think about who you'll invite, how to invite them, and what you'll want to offer. Visitors might include other farmers, local interest groups, or the local community.

Think about the information you want to get across and how you're going to achieve it. A formal farm tour with a specific start time will allow you to welcome visitors with an introductory talk, and to stop at pre-determined points to talk about different aspects of the farm. A self-guided tour for visitors with notice boards on the route will inevitably be less personal, but can still provide significant information and interest.

Many visitors may have limited knowledge of how the food they buy

is produced—and specifically why your farm is different. Speak from the heart and in non-technical language. Tell visitors your favorite things about the farm, how you care for your animals, and why you farm the way you do. Focus on the positive aspects of your high-welfare, pasture-based management, rather than dwelling on the unpleasantness of industrial agriculture. Don't try to cover too much and check for questions from your visitors throughout the event.

Make sure there are things to interest everyone. While mom and dad may be fascinated to hear you talk, junior may not stand still for long. Try to include some interactive, hands-on activities for kids that engage all their senses, such as completing a simple "check sheet" with 10 photographs of things they have to spot on the farm tour, or collecting eggs by hand, or planting a seed pot they can take with them. Everyday things on the farm may prove exciting to kids not used to the experience. If you have a school group, plan the day so the kids move swiftly from one activity or talking point to the next to maintain interest.

PRACTICAL STEPS

As well as being informative and enjoyable, every farm visit should be a safe experience. Farms can present significant dangers to the unaware—especially young children. Before you host any visit it's important to consider some basic health and safety issues to ensure everyone has a safe day. Start by contacting your insurer, as you may need to increase your public liability insurance.

While it's impossible to foresee and eliminate every risk, planning where you will take visitors and the areas to which they will have access will help you identify potential problems. No one expects the farm to be spotless, but visitors won't appreciate walking in manure! Walking the intended visitor route well before the event will allow you to wash down areas where visitors will go, as well as tidy up any broken machinery, scrap metal, and other odds and ends. Make sure your animals are well-bedded on the day of the tour. Not only does this present your farm in the best light, but it will minimize slips, falls or soiling.

If you're planning a tour on foot, think how different visitors might cope.



Brigid Sweeney



Brigid Sweeney

Karl Hudson (far left and left) of Rare Earth Farms, NC, with farm visitors on a trailer tour. If you plan to use a trailer make sure it's safe and that people cannot easily gain access to moving parts. Children must always be accompanied by an adult.

TRUE GRASS FARMS

Guido Frosini of True Grass Farms, CA, is passionate about the rewards of hosting farm visits.

We hosted our first farm tour in April 2012, under the theme “Come Celebrate Spring.” As we’d recently started selling at a farmer’s market, we invited customers and the local community to help them develop a deeper connection between their food, ecology, and culture.

The immediate feedback was fantastic: People left the farm with laughter and hugs—it was as though we had all been friends for a long time. The next day we sat down and

reviewed what went well and what we could improve. But everyone was excited to do it again.

Today, we hold at least one tour every month and have had over 500 visitors since March. From a business perspective, word of mouth is the most powerful marketing tool, but it’s also nice to get positive feedback directly from customers!

Before you host an event, make sure you have your liabilities covered and find out what is permitted or what needs a permit in your county. We ask every guest to sign a waiver and to follow our biosecurity measures. Find out what other farms are charging in the

area, and what they offer. What will you offer that’s different?

Always have a theme planned for each event and don’t try to force things or hurry. Talk about the wonderful things you do on the farm and why high-welfare management matters to you, but also mention the things that didn’t work and what you are working to improve. Finish by speaking of the dreams you have. If you are selling product after the event, think of where your guests are parked and position your market stand accordingly—and don’t forget credit card facilities!

Visit truegrassfarms.com.

Elderly visitors or young children might struggle to follow you down steep or slippery slopes, for example. If you intend to show visitors livestock, such as cows with newborn calves, let them observe from outside the pasture rather than taking lots of strangers into the field with you. *You* know it’s not a good idea to touch a hot wire, but unless you clearly mark it—and give people a warning—your visitors could be in for a nasty shock!

Some visitors will have a keen interest in tractors and other farm machinery, so consider parking one or two machines in a dedicated “safe” area on level ground, with all keys removed. Always block off areas where there may potentially be moving vehicles or dangerous machinery or buildings, such as grain silos.

BIOSECURITY

All animals naturally carry a range of microorganisms and some can be transmitted to humans, causing illness. Certain microorganisms, such as *Escherichia coli* O157 (*E. coli* O157), can present a serious health hazard—particularly in vulnerable groups. If you intend to allow visitors to view animals through a gate or rails make sure the immediate area is clean of any manure and wipe down rails with disinfectant beforehand. If you plan to allow visitors to come into direct contact with farm animals you MUST provide adequate



Guido Frosini of True Grass Farms, CA, talks to a group of visitors about the role of rotational grazing strategies on the farm, and how working with natural cycles helps to maintain healthy, diverse pastures at the farm.

hand washing facilities. For further advice, refer to AWA’s technical fact sheet on farm visits (see below).

Few visitors will realize they can present disease risks to your animals, too. Some may have backyard chickens or pets, or may have recently visited other farms in the area. Most people will be only too willing to follow biosecurity measures if you explain the risks of possible disease transmission. Foot dipping baths or mats with disinfectant will minimize the risk. Provide a brush so people can remove excess dirt

from their footwear before dipping and follow the manufacturer’s instructions to ensure the disinfectant remains effective. Alternatively, plastic overboots are relatively inexpensive and can easily be recycled at the end of the visit with other farm plastics.

For further information and advice on hosting a farm tour, download AWA’s Guidance Notes for Farms That Host Open Days and Farm Visits at AnimalWelfareApproved.org/farmers. 🐾



Favoring parasite-resistant ewes and rams—and culling ewes that are persistently affected by parasites—is a worthwhile breeding strategy for sheep. For sows, important traits to select for (in addition to prolificacy) are good maternal instincts and good temperament.

PLANNING FOR BREEDING

Breeding your own replacements can bring positive health and welfare improvements to your herd or flock. But it's important to be clear about your objectives—and the possible pitfalls—to avoid creating new welfare problems.

BY ANNA BASSETT, LEAD TECHNICAL ADVISOR

AWA farmers manage their animals so they remain healthy. AWA standards recommend that farmers develop breeding plans to produce their own replacement stock. This approach has benefits for herd and flock health and allows you to select for traits that suit your farm and management. However, even with all these good points, starting your own breeding program isn't something that you should rush into. Before you start you need to give careful thought to your reasons for selection, as well as issues such as cross breeding, inbreeding, and line breeding.

First, you need to decide what you are trying to achieve. Do you already have all the traits you want to promote within your herd or flock? If not, you will need to bring in at least some replacement animals to introduce these traits. The kind of traits you might want to promote include: good growth from grass-based systems, good leg and foot health, resilience to parasites, good udder structure and teat placement, and good maternal traits. Remember that character and disposition are equally important. The best animal in the world becomes a liability if she tries to attack you every time she gives birth. Alternatively, you might have a favorite animal who has a bad udder that her offspring always struggle to latch on to. Keeping her daughters will probably perpetuate that unwanted trait.

To accurately assess which animals you should be breeding from requires detailed records to establish which of your animals are most closely meeting the aims for your herd or flock—and which have given you problems. Some traits are more easily passed from parent to offspring, but if you start with parents that have problems you are likely to get offspring with problems.

Many farms breed their own female replacements but continue to bring in males. If you completely close your herd and breed both your male and female replacement stock you must be careful not to inbreed. Inbreeding is defined as mating animals that are closely related, such as mating parents with offspring or brothers with sisters. This leads to a limited gene pool and can result in lost vigor—sometimes described as inbreeding depression. However, some farms carefully manage their herds to keep the male and female replacement breeding lines separate and avoid inbreeding (see case study box on page 13).

One form of inbreeding that is sometimes used is line breeding. The aim in line breeding is to identify an outstanding animal and to keep breeding programs focused on breeding from or to that animal. Typically, a single male is bred to many females. However, line breeding should only be attempted in herds or flocks that are of such high merit that it is difficult to find animals from outside to improve the breed.

Finally, if you intend to introduce new genetics make sure you aren't bringing in more of the same! When you look closely at some rare breeds, the entire U.S. population may trace back to a very small number of ancestors. In these circumstances buying a new breeding animal from a different herd is no guarantee that you're actually bringing in new blood.

Cross breeding, as the name suggests, is when you take two different breeds and cross them. Cross breeding can lead to hybrid vigor, where the crossbred animal combines the strengths of both the parents. For example, the average weaning weight of a crossbred offspring may be



Mike Suarez



Mike Suarez

Breeding from previously crossbred hatchery chickens can result in the loss of all the benefits of the breed development program. Conventional cattle breeding programs have focused on productivity, often at the expense of important genetic traits such as longevity, fertility, and general animal health.

higher than the average weaning weights for either parent. More complicated cross breeding programs will cross two breeds to give a crossbred offspring that is then itself bred to another breed or cross breed to give the final (or terminal) generation. For a true cross breeding program you will need to maintain the two lines you use for parents and continually cross them to give the benefits you are looking for. Taking a crossbred offspring and crossing it with another crossbred offspring will not perpetuate the same benefits.

It is also important to note that some poultry “breeds” are actually the crossbred generation. For example, when you buy birds of a particular breed or strain to raise for meat or for egg laying, you might think you can do without the

hatchery and cross these birds to produce your replacement meat birds or pullets. However, in many cases, the hatchery’s breeding flock consists of a pure bred male line and a pure bred female line that are crossed to produce the chicks that go on to be meat birds or laying hens. If you try to breed further generations from these crossbred birds you are likely to lose all the benefits of the breed development. In other words, the birds you cross on farm won’t grow or produce eggs like the birds you get from the hatchery.

Breeding your own replacements can be both interesting and rewarding. But, as this brief overview explains, it is important to get advice before embarking on a breeding program for the first time. 🐔

GRAZIN’ ANGUS ACRES

Dan Gibson runs 250 head of cattle on 450 acres at Grazin’ Angus Acres, NY. The herd was started with registered Angus animals, chosen for their ability to thrive in a grass-based system and their meat quality. Quite a few beef farms breed their own replacement heifers, but Dan also runs a bull breeding line.

Detailed records are maintained for each cow, which are used as part of the breeding selection program. The aim is to have a herd that calves easily and produces strong calves with good vitality. Potential replacement bulls are first assessed at birth—those that don’t meet the grade are castrated—with further selection as they develop. “For a successful breeding program you have to be pretty ruthless,” Dan explains. “For example, if a heifer has bad feet, she will pass this to her offspring. So keeping her to breed is not a good idea.” Potential replacement animals are also assessed on their weight at weaning and their confirmation.



Mike Suarez

Breeding their own replacements has benefitted Grazin’ Angus Acres’s efforts to keep a healthy and highly productive herd that is well suited to the farm’s environment. Visit grazinangusacres.com.

A Question of Markets

BY TIM HOLMES, LEAD AUDITOR

The AWA program is a birth to slaughter program and all animals must be managed from birth to slaughter to meet the AWA standards. A specific requirement is that farmers in the program must have compliant (or suitable) markets, where all livestock products come from animals raised on AWA farms and slaughtered in AWA recommended plants. But when farmers first join the program, some find that not all their sales outlets meet the AWA standards, which can lead to a lot of questions—and unnecessary concern.

AWA understands that it can take time to develop suitable markets. Our standards state that farmers may still be eligible for approval so long as they have a plan to develop suitable outlets—and can demonstrate progress toward selling all stock through them. Farms that do not have compliant markets for all their animals will receive non-compliances for standards 13.3.6 and 13.3.6.1 at audit, and will need to develop a plan that outlines what they are doing to meet this requirement, and show year-on-year progress toward meeting this goal. So how long do you

have to develop compliant markets? Well, we look at plans on an individual farm basis, taking into account farm size and the products or animals marketed. Plans must be realistic and achievable: we would sooner see plans that start with small but achievable gains, than those that are completely unrealistic. The key is that you need to make yearly progress toward the goal for your farm's markets to be 100 percent compliant. We're happy to discuss situations where a small percentage of markets are non-compliant, such as on-farm slaughter for home consumption or sale to neighbors, so long as you're selling the vast majority of your stock through compliant markets.

What happens if you lose a compliant market? Again, we understand that markets can be fickle. A farm with 100 percent compliant markets could lose a key outlet and find itself with non-compliances for standards 13.3.6 and 13.3.6.1. In this situation, the same guidelines apply: you will need to develop a plan and work toward building compliant markets again, making year-on-year progress to maintain certification. 🐏



Various management options are available to shepherds for the control of fly strike that can all help avoid reliance on unnecessary tail docking.

Tail Docking Sheep

Some farmers tail dock their sheep to prevent fly strike. But while fly strike is a serious welfare issue, tail docking is not the only option for control. Research also shows that tail docking causes significant pain and distress, as well as possible future complications.

AWA's *Management to Avoid Tail Docking Sheep* fact sheet examines the welfare implications of tail docking and considers alternative management strategies to minimize fly strike, such as breed choices, feeding and parasite control, and the appropriate use of insecticides.

Download *Management to Avoid Tail Docking Sheep* at [AnimalWelfareApproved.org](https://www.animalwelfareapproved.org) (select "Farmers" tab, then "Technical Support") or call (800) 373-8806.



AWA standards prohibit the routine sale of livestock to feedlots, as well as through stockyards, auction houses and video auctions.

Luke Meerman of Grassfields Cheese, Michigan

Farms across the U.S. and Canada are joining the AWA program. We meet Luke Meerman, who manages the 250-acre Grassfields Cheese on land that his family has farmed since 1892.

WHERE DO YOU FARM?

We are blessed to manage 250 acres of pasture, about 20 miles northwest of Grand Rapids, MI. My wife, Vicky, and I run the cheese business, as well as marketing and PR. My brother, Jesse, and his wife, Betsy, manage and milk the cows. Many other family members contribute to the success of our family business. We run 110 cows, with Holstein, Jersey, Normandy, Brown Swiss, and Swedish Red genetics, which we select for the ability to thrive on grass and for milk quality.

WHO ARE YOUR CUSTOMERS?

Cheese is our main business and we produce around 35,000 lbs. a year. About half is sold directly to retail buyers, such as

restaurants and retailers, and a further third to wholesalers. We sell the remainder through our farm store and online. Our cheese is now available in over 130 retail outlets across Michigan and Indiana.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU OFFER OTHER FARMERS?

The restaurant industry offers huge opportunities for farmers right now. Chefs who never cared about welfare and environmental issues are seeking to give their customers the story behind the food they serve. I would encourage every farmer to do as much of the selling as possible. If you can make that personal connection yourself, you'll rarely get turned away. Visit grassfieldscheese.com. 🇺🇸



Grassfields Cheese



Grassfields Cheese

The AWA logo provides visibility and credibility—at no cost to you. To learn more about our program and standards visit AnimalWelfareApproved.org or call (800) 373-8806.

The Meerman family (left), taken at Grassfields Cheese this spring, with Luke Meerman on the far right. The 200-head dairy cattle herd (right) include Holstein, Jersey, Normandy, Brown Swiss, and Swedish Red genetics.

Tales from the Field

STAY UP TO DATE WITH AWA'S MONTHLY E-NEWS UPDATE

Designed to complement our quarterly *AWA Newsletter*, AWA's *Tales from the Field* is a free regular email update that will keep you informed about the program's current activities, as well as related news and events.

Sent out once a month, *Tales from the Field* includes the latest thought-provoking blogs from AWA's Program Director, Andrew Gunther, as well as the latest AWA press releases and other program-related announcements, relevant external news, media coverage of farmers in the program, listings of new farms in the program, news of upcoming events, and much more.

Signing up is very straightforward: Simply visit AnimalWelfareApproved.org, select the option at the



Mike Suarez

bottom to "join our email list," and enter your email address. Alternatively, call (800) 373-8806 to add your email to the list. You can unsubscribe at any time.



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“We're getting more and more interest from retail customers and consumers about our AWA certification. We see it as a bridge of trust between the consumer and farmer.”

—Luke Meerman, Grassfields Cheese, Coopersville, MI (see page 15).

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WHY JOIN ANIMAL WELFARE APPROVED?

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AWA certification lets consumers know your animals were sustainably raised on pasture or range with the highest welfare standards—all at no charge for farmers!

To learn more visit AnimalWelfareApproved.org or call (800) 373-8806