

What does 'pastured' mean?

At Forks Farm, we raise our chickens and turkeys according to the definition below, outlined by the American Pastured Poultry Producers Association. While not a legal definition, it is the one we believe—and tests confirm—provides us with the best nutrition possible.

- Birds on pasture daily for a minimum of 1/2 their life span. AT FORKS:** Our broiler chicks are in the brooder for 2 1/2 - 3 weeks before going out on pasture for the last 5 weeks. In the brooder, we deliver green grass and clover for the chicks to eat.
- Bedding in the brooder managed properly** to avoid capping and odors, and used in sufficient quantities to ensure a hygienic lounge for the flock. Poultry must not lounge on raw (uncomposting) feces. **AT FORKS:** We add fresh bedding to the brooder each day to provide a dry environment for the chicks, capture the nitrogen in their droppings, and keep odors down. Scratching by the chicks encourages composting of the bedding.
- Birds exposed to fresh pasture daily.** Fresh means the pasture has never been grazed by poultry, or has been allowed to regrow sufficiently after a previous grazing by poultry. **AT FORKS:** We move our broiler pens 2x a day to ensure our birds always have fresh green plants to eat. Our broilers, layers, and turkeys never run over the same ground twice in a season.
- Birds moved in a manner that does not over-fertilize any one spot,** allowing for regrowth before reuse. Indicators of over-fertilization are burned vegetation and bare ground; regrowth is restoration of the vegetation to its normal growth height. **AT FORKS:** Each pen contains the right number of birds to ensure their manure is spread in amounts the soil can handle.
- Flock levels allow for free movement and natural social behavior.** Indicators of natural social behavior include no cannibalizing and ample room for scratching and pecking for grit, vegetation, insects and seeds. **AT FORKS:** Based on experience over the years we know the optimum number of animals in the brooder and in the pasture to keep stress levels low, and the birds and pasture healthy.
- NO synthetic** growth stimulants, medications, or antibiotics. Vaccinations are allowed as required by law. **AT FORKS:** Our fresh-air pasture system means no need for these crutches.
- NO debeaking. AT FORKS:** The only reason to debeak is to prevent cannibalism in stressful, crowded poultry operations. Debeaking is not necessary here because we grow our animals in low-stress, uncrowded conditions. They have the room they need to live full, healthy lives.



FREE RANGE and other labels If it were pastured, they'd label it such

FREE RANGE— For MEAT chickens to be certified free range by the USDA they must be allowed *access to the outdoors*. Most meat birds labeled free range typically have access only to dirt yards. Free-range chicken EGGS, however, have no legal definition in the U.S. Egg producers themselves have no common definition. Many egg farmers sell their eggs as free range if their cages are 2-3 inches above average size, or there is a window in the building. Free range says nothing of how much—if any—vegetation exists in the area where the birds are kept. From what we can tell, if these “free range” birds were truly pastured (see checklist at left) they would be labeled as such.

CAGE FREE — A label you'll find on some EGGS. There is no legal definition. Cage free simply means the chickens are housed without the use of cages. There is no pasture requirement, legal or otherwise.

ORGANIC — A USDA certified organic poultry or egg label means the birds were fed organic feed and were only required to have access to the outdoors, not pasture. Access to pasture—and then for no specified amount of time—is required only for ruminants, but grain may still be fed. In short, the organic label does not guarantee a pasture lifestyle for poultry or the no-grain lifestyle necessary for the most nutritious beef or lamb.

GRASS-FED — The only guarantee you have that the beef or lamb you buy is 100% grass-fed comes from the grower. There is no legal or USDA certification that grass-fed means no grain fed ever.

**To learn more about the benefits
of pasture-raised foods, visit**

www.forksfarmmarket.com
www.eatwild.com
www.westonaprice.org

Are we an organic farm? We are not USDA certified organic, but we use organic growing techniques to build soil quality and ensure animal health.