

# The Perception of Pasture

Health food stores and some grocers offer alternatives to conventional meat and eggs. We are professionally associated and market to the same group of customers so naturally, we have inquiring minds. We have asked questions of the name-brand providers of natural and certified organic meats and eggs. We have not found any brands that allow their poultry to have direct access to pasture. Still, their product's packaging states "free-ranged" and their brochures as well as their websites include beautiful pictures of livestock grazing lush pastures.

Sheesh! A farm such as ours that actually pastures their livestock gets to thinking... *If customers perceive these products to be one in the same, why would they take the time to patronize a local farm when the "same thing" can be purchased at the supermarket?*

We hope to impress upon you that our products are truly unique and special. **We don't create the Perception of Pasture but rather, the Pasture of your Perception!** For the livestock, pasturing allows direct access to their natural diet along with the benefits of sunshine and fresh air. For the environment, managed rotational grazing allows manure to be evenly distributed and absorbed thereby eliminating non-point concerns. For the consumer, pasturing induces nutritional qualities in the meat that are unobtainable anywhere else!

What follows is a list of some of the terms used on product packaging. With exception to Amish-Raised, all are regulated terms. The *reality* scenario demonstrates what is legally allowed under government guidelines. The point of all this is to ask ourselves: Does the legal use of the term match our perception of the term?

## "Certified Organic"

Product Packaging: Pretty red barns, livestock dispersed on lush pasture, certified feed.

Reality: Pole barns, livestock concentrated in buildings, no pasture\*, certified feed.

## "Free-Ranged"

Product Packaging: Pretty red barns, livestock dispersed on lush pasture.

Reality: Pole barns, livestock concentrated in buildings, no pasture, part-time access to outdoor dirt yard.

## "Natural"

Product Packaging: Pretty red barns, livestock dispersed on lush pasture, all natural feed.

Reality: Pole barns, caged unless stated otherwise, livestock concentrated in buildings, no pasture, no artificial ingredients in feed.

Per the USDA, antibiotics can be fed to livestock sold with the *Natural* label.

## "Fresh Poultry"

Product Packaging: Pretty red barns, livestock dispersed on lush pasture, farm-fresh statement.

Reality: Pole barns, livestock concentrated in buildings, no pasture, poultry in which the temperature has never been below 26 F.

## "Amish-Raised"

Product Packaging: Pretty red barns, livestock dispersed on lush pasture, Amish buggy.

Reality: As various as the number of Amish farms. Some Amish farms raise livestock on contract in confinements. Some use medications, some do not. Product packaging would market positives if they did indeed exist. Goodness is perceived.

\*The issue of access to pasture is a current point of contention within the National Organic Program. Virtually 100% of the certified organic poultry found in stores and co-ops are "free-ranged" in pole barns with 15-20,000 birds. The birds are allowed limited access to an outside dirt yard which is quickly inundated with manure. Surprisingly, poultry confinement is not yet the primary issue of contention, but rather the fact that Horizon Dairy, (Dean Foods), amongst others, are selling certified organic dairy products from cows housed in 5000 head confinements.

**Result:** *False perceptions create a competitive disadvantage for the farm that actually disperses livestock on pasture.*