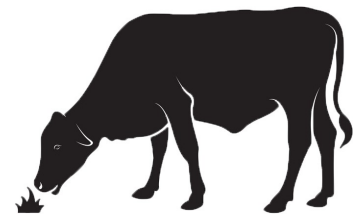


The Nutritional Benefits of Pasture-Raised Beef Cattle

Sweet Grass Meats

Better feed, better meat

Beef cattle are designed to eat plants. And almost all do for the majority of their lives. However, most conventionally-raised cattle are eventually moved to a feedlot for the final four to eight months where they eat a diet high in grain. Cattle that remain on pasture instead of going to a feedlot continue to eat plants. This results in healthier animals ... and more nutritious food for people as well.



Studies show the nutritional value of beef from cattle that consume grass and forage for their entire lives is higher than beef from cattle that are fed grain.

Less saturated fat, more heart-healthy polyunsaturated fats

Better Fat Quality

- ▶ Replacing saturated fats with polyunsaturated fats is associated with reduced blood levels of total and LDL cholesterol.
- ▶ Studies suggest that replacement reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease, including heart attacks, and related deaths.

Lower ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 polyunsaturated fats

Increase in Vitamins

- ▶ Omega-6 fats are considered more inflammatory than omega-3 fats.
- ▶ Research suggests a lower ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fats may improve cognitive function and reduce the risk of many chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Higher levels of antioxidants: vitamin E and β -carotene

- ▶ Vitamin E and β -carotene protect cells from damage due to free radicals.
- ▶ β -carotene is a precursor of vitamin A and is critical for vision health.

By the numbers...

Compared to grain-fed beef, beef from cattle raised 100% on pasture has:

3x more omega-3 fats

60% lower omega-6: omega-3 ratio

1.5x higher polyunsaturated: saturated fat

3x more vitamin E

1.5x more β -carotene

Why feed matters

Beef quality is influenced by many factors, including an animal's genetics, age, breed, location, and **very significantly**, the animal's diet.

Cattle are a type of ruminant animal. Ruminants have a stomach with four compartments, the largest of which is called the rumen. The rumen is a fermentation chamber where fibrous grasses are digested by bacteria to produce high quality protein (i.e. meat).

Forages are the edible parts of plants other than grain and include pasture vegetation and grasses. They are good sources of beneficial omega-3 fats. In contrast, grains such as corn are dominated by more inflammatory omega-6 fats. Due to the way cattle digest their food, they are able to convert the beneficial fat and nutrients in plants into more nutritious meat for people to eat.



Shopping for beef

Grass-fed beef implies that only grass was fed to the cattle. However, the USDA does not tightly define this term or require on-farm inspections to verify the claim. While many farms use the term with integrity, it is possible that "grass-fed" can be used to label conventional beef that was started on grass but finished on grain.

Grass-finished beef implies that grass was fed in the final phase of production, and therefore the cattle were on grass their entire lives. However, this label is not regulated by the USDA.

Because these claims are not 100% reliable, look for third party verified labels, or farms that use humane practices but may not be certified due to the costs involved. Learn more at: foodanimalconcernstrust.org/food-labels

The Bottom Line

Pasture-raised animals produce nutritionally superior food for people. In addition to the nutritional advantages, there are many animal welfare and environmental benefits associated with pasture-based animal agriculture. Please consider supporting your local family farmers who raise their animals humanely on grass and well-managed pasture.



Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT) is a national nonprofit organization that promotes the safe and humane production of meat, milk, and eggs. FACT offers grants, scholarships, webinars and a mentorship program for livestock and poultry farmers who wish to raise their animals on pasture.