



## common questions

Choosing healthy, natural chicken for your table should be simple. Here, we've compiled some answers to some of the most often asked questions and misunderstood labeling terms about chicken.

Just click on a topic that interests you below. Then select any question in that topic to see the answer. If you'd like to see them all, simply select the provided print and/or download options.

If you have questions not included here, please don't hesitate to [contact us](#). We'd love to help.

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## **LABEL CLAIMS**

### **Cage Free**

**Q I noticed your label says that your chickens are “cage free.” What does that mean?**

A It means that our chickens are never, ever raised in cages. They are free to move about in modern, climate-controlled barns with strict bio-security plans. This reduces the threat of stress or exposure to the elements and environmental dangers such as avian influenza.

### **Grade A**

**Q Is Just BARE® chicken Grade A quality? It’s not on the label.**

A Just BARE® chicken does not display the Grade A shield but, in fact, actually exceeds Grade A standards for things like shape, meatiness, bruising, broken bones and color. The totally clear package lets consumers judge the quality firsthand. Accordingly, we wanted to use the label to provide other important attributes and information that cannot be assessed with the human eye.

### **Hormones: Not Allowed By USDA**

**Q If there are no hormones added to your chicken, why doesn’t your label read, “hormone-free?”**

A Our package does not read "hormone-free," because all living creatures have hormones in their bodies naturally, including chickens. These hormones regulate many of the chickens' functions similar to the way they do in humans. Because there are naturally occurring hormones in chicken, we can't state on our label that our chicken is hormone-free.

**Q What does “no added hormones” mean?**

A Simply stated, that means no hormones or steroids were used in the production of our chicken products.

In fact, no hormone or steroid has ever been approved by the USDA or FDA for use in poultry. As a vertically integrated producer, we control every aspect of production - from hatching through processing and marketing. We mill our own corn-based feed using a proprietary formula that produces healthy chickens, and ultimately a wholesome, nutritious and flavorful consumer product.

## **No Antibiotics - EVER**

### **Q What does “no antibiotics—EVER” mean?**

A There are a lot of claims regarding antibiotics usage. However, what's stated on the label is what really matters since only label statements are regulated by the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service.

According to the USDA-FSIS definition, "No antibiotics-ever" means a chicken has **never** been administered antibiotics during its life cycle. This includes while the chick is incubating in the shell as well as after it hatches and throughout its lifetime. Just BARE™ chicken meets these requirements and so we are able to state it on our labels.

### **Q Is the use of antibiotics in chickens dangerous to humans?**

A Antibiotics have been used responsibly and judiciously for many years in the chicken industry. The USDA and FDA enforce strict standards for use of medications in food animals.

Any medication administered to animals used for meat has an established withdrawal period, meaning that medications cannot be used a specific number of days prior to the animal being processed. This ensures that all medication has passed through the animal's system, thus virtually eliminating any risk of antibiotic residue in the meat. While there is controversy in the scientific community regarding administering antibiotics to chickens and creating "antibiotic resistance" in humans, there is no scientific evidence to support that this occurs with responsible antibiotics use.

Nonetheless, a growing number of consumers simply prefer to buy meat products from animals that have never been given antibiotics. And that is why we've totally eliminated the use of antibiotics in the rearing of Just BARE® flocks.

## **Nothing But All Natural**

### **Q Does Just BARE® chicken contain any added ingredients?**

A No. Just BARE® chicken does not contain added solution or ingredients of any type including salt, water, carrageenan (seaweed extract) or other binding agents, or preservatives. It's 100% all natural chicken and nothing else. While enhanced chicken can contain up to 330 milligrams of sodium per serving, all Just BARE all natural chicken contains 75 milligrams per serving.

**Q Does Just BARE® chicken contain any allergens?**

A No. Because Just BARE® is nothing but all natural chicken and does not contain added solution or ingredients, it does not contain any allergens. Unless you're allergic to chicken!

**Q Your packaging indicates that Just BARE® is nothing but “all natural chicken.” Isn’t this the case with all chicken labeled “all natural?”**

A No, it's not. Not all chicken products that bear "all natural" claims are truly nothing but chicken.

USDA's definition of "all natural" currently allows using an "all natural" claim on a label on chicken that has been enhanced with added water, sodium, carrageenan (seaweed extract) or other binding agents. This is often referred to as "pumped-up" chicken. While "natural," these added ingredients are often unexpected and confusing to consumers. They can also affect the nutritional content of the food they're buying. For example, a single serving of "pumped up" chicken can contain up to 370 milligrams of sodium. Compare this sodium level to the following typically "salty" foods per serving: potato chips, 180 milligrams; large order of fast food French Fries, 330 milligrams. That's why it's important to read the fine print on "all natural" labels, to ensure that the chicken you're buying is truly nothing but chicken.

## **Truthfulness of Claims**

**Q How do I know all the package claims on your label are truthful?**

A Just BARE® follows all labeling regulations as mandated by the USDA-Food Safety & Inspection Service (FSIS)-the agency responsible for ensuring the truthfulness and accuracy of labeling for meat and poultry. Every Just BARE product label is reviewed and approved by the USDA-FSIS to ensure that all product claims are accurate and truthful.

## **Vegetable Fed**

**Q I noticed your label says “vegetable fed.” What does that mean?**

A It means that Just BARE® chickens are not fed animal byproducts of any type (includes meat and bone meal, and vegetable/animal fat blends). Though these animal-based ingredients pose no safety risk, we switched to all-vegetable sources for protein and fat due to more consumers wanting chicken raised without them.

## **PACKAGE QUESTIONS**

### **Package Code**

**Q How do I use the family farm code to trace a product's origin?**

A Simply enter the 3- digit family farm code found on the package in the area of our website shown below. This option is available on every page on our site.

What you'll learn are some basic facts about the family farmer who raised the chicken you just purchased.

In some cases, though, you'll only be able to find out the location of the family farm-that's because that particular farmer may not have given us permission to reveal more about them.

We respect the privacy and wishes of our family farm partners and, accordingly, cannot provide more specific, personal information, based on their individual convictions.

**Q What does the printed code contain that appears on the package?**

A Every package of Just BARE™ chicken features a manufacturer's freshness and origin code that provides several pieces of important information, including:

- A manufacturer's sell-by date that indicates when the product should be sold fresh by for best quality.
- A use or freeze-by instruction that instructs consumers to cook or freeze the package of raw chicken within 48 hours of purchase.\*
- A unique product identification code that enhances product traceability and safety.
- A family farm code that allows the product to be traced back to the farm where the chicken was raised.
- Country of origin information, verifying the product was made in the U.S.A.

\*It is not safe to use chicken products in your refrigerator that has been stored there for more than 48 hours after purchase-even if the sell-by date has not passed. That's because very slight temperature changes dramatically increase product spoilage and bacterial development and growth. Fresh chicken in the grocery store is kept at a very consistent, monitored temperature-which increases a product's shelf life. In contrast, when a consumer purchases fresh chicken, it's placed in the grocery cart, walked around the store, checked out, and transported home, exposing it to temperature variations and stress, reducing its shelf life.

**Recyclability**

**Q Is the whole chicken packaging recyclable?**

A Unfortunately, the whole chicken packaging is not recyclable. For food safety purposes, the whole chicken bag is made of plastic that has barrier properties which make the plastic a type that is not recyclable. We will continue to research packaging options that would provide the necessary food safety properties while affording the added benefit of recyclability.

**Q Is your plastic tray recyclable? How do I know?**

A Yes, but only on a limited basis. Though made of recyclable #1 PET/PETE (polyethylene terephthalate) plastic--the same plastic used to make most plastic bottles--they are not able to be recycled in the same way as bottles due to the way they are manufactured. As a result, many municipal recycling programs do not sort them separately from bottles and recycle them.

In case you're wondering, the package's peel-away plastic lid is made of a multi-layer PET and polyester material--which, like the tray, may be recycled on a limited basis. However, we strongly suggest you check with your recycling program before attempting to recycle any of the package's plastic components.

Remember: the package's paperboard sleeve can be recycled with other paper products.

## **REARING PRACTICES**

### **Animal Care & Welfare**

**Q Are your chickens able to eat and drink whenever they want?**

A Yes. Our chickens are allowed to eat and drink at will. Pure, filtered water from a closed, sanitary system is available at all times, and feed is made available at set times throughout the day.

**Q Does your company have an animal welfare policy? What is it?**

A Yes. We respect animal rights and work hard to instill humane caring practices into everything we do. From start to finish, our chickens are handled with the utmost care by people well-trained in animal science, nutrition, handling, and rearing. We communicate our animal care philosophy to all new and existing employees, and anything less than the most humane treatment is not tolerated. A healthy chicken is a well-cared-for and well-treated chicken. That's the basis of how we operate.

**Q Where are your chickens raised?**

A All of our chickens are well-cared for by our family farmers throughout Minnesota who are passionate about what they do and know what's best for chickens. Our farmers are highly experienced and many have made raising chickens both a family business and way of life--some for more than three generations.

Though not free-range, our chickens are free to roam in modern, climate-controlled, comfortable [barns](#); are able to eat and drink whenever they want; are able to interact as they would in the outdoors; are provided the right amount of light and darkness to simulate natural conditions; and are protected from environmental hazards like avian influenza.

**Q Who determines what “humane treatment” is?**

A Just BARE® follows the Animal Welfare Guidelines as established by the National Chicken Council (NCC) in conjunction with industry experts and top poultry scientists from leading universities around the country. We routinely validate our performance using the established NCC Animal Welfare Audit Checklist. This ongoing audit helps to ensure the proper care, management and handling of our chickens.

**Q Why aren't your chickens free-range?**

A Chickens are natural omnivores and will eat almost anything and everything they find, including animal droppings, bugs and worms, and even unnatural things like coins and litter. Besides sheltering them from the extremely hot summers and cold winters we have in the upper Midwest, raising chickens in enclosed environments helps eliminate exposure to droppings from wild birds such as ducks and gulls. These wild birds can carry diseases like avian influenza that can jeopardize flock safety and well-being.

However, our chickens are never caged, can roam about freely, and eat, drink and interact as they would outdoors. Advanced heating and cooling systems keep barns well-ventilated and comfortable during the extremes of Minnesota's winters and summers.

**Chicken Feed**

**Q What are arsenicals?**

A Many poultry companies add arsenicals (one common type is Roxarsone) to their chicken feed. This additive contains a small amount of an organic, naturally occurring form of arsenic, and helps prevent a serious illness, called coccidiosis. This illness occurs in the intestinal tract of chickens, causing suffering and even death. While there are no safety concerns regarding the use of arsenicals, they are not given to Just BARE® flocks because of consumer concerns surrounding their use.

**Q If Just BARE® flocks aren't given arsenicals, how is coccidiosis (intestinal tract illness) prevented?**

A Just BARE® flocks are given a proprietary feed formula to control the illness. This is used in conjunction with a practice called "flock rotation." Simply stated, this means we don't raise one Just BARE flock right after the other, over and over again, at the same family farm. Rather, we rotate the family farms where the Just BARE flocks are raised. This prevents the organisms that cause the illness from building up in the barns. Most importantly, it helps to ensure healthy chickens, humane care, and safe consumer products.

**Q What do you feed your chickens?**

A We provide our chickens quality feed that is natural and nutritionally balanced. Our proprietary formulas are developed under the direction of experienced nutritionists to produce healthy chickens, and wholesome, tasty chicken products. Our feed contains nutritious corn, soybean meal, canola meal, minerals, vitamins and other natural ingredients—most of which is sourced locally. There are no antibiotics, no added hormones/steroids, no animal byproducts and no arsenicals.

**Q Where does your chicken feed come from?**

A We have long-term relationships with reputable suppliers for all of our feed ingredients, including many local family farmers who provide us with corn harvested from their fields. Our suppliers are based in the upper Midwest and meet all FDA and USDA standards for feed safety and quality. Accordingly, we have 100% confidence in the integrity, wholesomeness and safety of all of our feed ingredients.

## **FOOD SAFETY QUESTIONS**

### **Avian Influenza: Chicken is Safe**

**Q Do I have to worry about eating chicken that has been exposed to avian influenza?**

A Avian influenza is NOT a food safety issue. Avian influenza (low or highly pathogenic strains) cannot be transmitted by properly cooked poultry. No one has ever become infected with avian influenza by consuming properly cooked poultry or poultry products.

For more details visit:

[http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/Chicken\\_Food\\_Safety\\_Focus/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/Chicken_Food_Safety_Focus/index.asp)

**Q Is there anything I can do to help protect myself from avian influenza?**

A Again, avian influenza is not a food safety issue. Nonetheless, one sure means of protection is always cooking your chicken well done. Visually, that means until juices run clear and the meat is no longer pink. And a fork should insert easily into the meat. However, to be safe every time, the USDA recommends always using a meat thermometer and cooking chicken to an internal temperature of at least 165°F. Keep hands and surfaces clean. Hand-washing is the single most effective means of preventing the spread of bacteria and viruses. Use hot, soapy water; scrub at least for 20 seconds, and don't forget your fingernails! For more details, visit [http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/Chicken\\_Food\\_Safety\\_Focus/index.asp](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/Chicken_Food_Safety_Focus/index.asp)

**Q What precautions—if any—do you take to decrease the risk of avian influenza?**

A As an added safety precaution, a portion of every Just BARE™ flock is voluntarily tested, under USDA's National Poultry Improvement Plan, before the chickens leave the barn for the presence of H5/H7, the Avian influenza strains that may be passed to humans (and have in Asia and other countries).

If a strain of H5/H7 avian influenza is found in a commercial flock (which is extremely unlikely

due to the strict bio-security safeguards in place), the entire flock will be humanely euthanized and will not enter the food supply. In addition, the area will be quarantined to prevent spread to wild birds or other poultry flocks.

Since this testing began, every Just BARE flock has been free of avian influenza H5/H7.

**Q What's avian influenza?**

A Avian Influenza is a common disease that occurs in chickens. Gold'n Plump Poultry, the producer and distributor of Just BARE®, takes avian influenza very seriously, and has been successfully protecting its flocks from this, and other illnesses, since the first cases surfaced more than 20 years ago. It is something the poultry industry in the U.S. has been dealing with effectively for many years.

**Q Where can I get more information about avian influenza?**

A To learn more about avian influenza and the safety of poultry products, visit [www.avianinfluenzainfo.org](http://www.avianinfluenzainfo.org) or [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). Our consumer care specialists are also on hand to answer your questions.

By Phone: At 1-877-328-2838 (M through F, 8 am to 4:30 pm CST)

By Email: At [wecare@justbarechicken.com](mailto:wecare@justbarechicken.com).

**The Basics for Safe Cooking & Handling**

**Q How do I know my chicken is properly cooked?**

A There are some visual cues to help you know when your chicken is thoroughly cooked. These include:

- Juices should run clear and there should be no sign of pink in the meat.
- A fork should insert easily into the meat.

However to be sure, experts advise to always use a meat thermometer. USDA Food Safety & Inspection Service recommends cooking chicken regardless of cut to an internal temperature of at least 165°F. Though you may want your chicken more well done.

Take the temperature in the thickest section of the thigh or breast. Be sure the temperature probe doesn't touch the bone or the cooking surface.

**Q What can I do to ensure safety while cooking and handling fresh chicken?**

A Most food safety issues related to chicken and other fresh meat arise from bacteria (such as salmonella) common in the digestive tracts of farm animals. These bacteria are easily destroyed by heat. Therefore, proper cooking of poultry virtually eliminates the risk of these potentially harmful bacteria. Visit the [bare basics](#) section for more safe cooking tips for chicken as well as tips for safe handling.