

## **What Is Your Beef IQ?**

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In this edition, we will explore labels and beef production methods.

Cattle are raised in different ways. Family farms make up the majority of cattle producers in the United States. The labels on meat help consumers make purchasing choices at the store.

Family farms make up 96% of the United States farm production system. Only 2-3% of farms are family owned corporations and less than 1% of farms are actually corporate farms. Half of the beef cattle produced are raised on ranches that have a herd count of 100 head or less.

The different labels on beef help the consumer determine which type of beef is best for them. The main labels explain how to handle and cook the product itself. Other labels on the product are used for marketing the beef to certain consumers' preferences.

The difference in taste between different grass-fed beef is due to different factors. Forage can have variable plants within it that cause beef to have variations of flavor. Grain finished cattle have a more consistent flavor due to the fact that grain has very little variation.

The flavor profile of beef finished on grass and beef finished on grain is different. The feedlot industry helps produce a more uniform flavor in the end product of beef by feeding grain. Weather and management of an operation can also impact the taste of a beef product.

Antibiotic free labeled beef is different than USDA Organic. Cattle are required to have a withdrawal period from antibiotics before they are harvested to ensure there is no antibiotic residue in the meat product.

The beef industry uses technology at every phase of production to increase the quality and yield of red meat. Removing technology from the beef industry would require more cattle to produce the same amount of beef we produce today, which would require more resources. By using technology, ranchers are able to produce more beef with less resources.

Gluten free is a trendy term in the current market place, but it is not necessary on a beef products. Meat products do not contain gluten. Putting gluten free on a meat product is only for marketing purposes.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions about the information provided and visit [pathtotheplate.tamu.edu](http://pathtotheplate.tamu.edu) for more information.

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