

Why You Should Care What Cows Eat

Alternative Health Care Articles from Ask a Healer:

Comparing nutritional values: grass fed vs grainfed meat.

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So what's wrong with a corn diet? There's a body of evidence to suggest that cattle were never meant to live on corn, and that humans are not nutritionally helped by a diet high in corn grain products either. One of the main nutritional concerns is that there is a natural balance between Omega-6 fatty acids and Omega-3 fatty acids that cannot be maintained in the body with a diet that is mostly corn.

Also, corn creates gas and bloating, and I think any discomfort and physical imbalance an animal has affects the quality of the meat. I also notice that, when I can find grass fed beef and eat that, I feel better. However, it's hard to find it and find also that the cattle have not been given antibiotics, hormones, steroids or animal-byproducts.

As more people become aware of the health benefits in grass fed beef, I think there will be more of it available. It's simply the law of supply and demand. We create supply by demanding certain types of foods.

Nutritional Differences: Grain fed beef has more Omega-6, compared to the Omega-3 in the same meat. As mentioned earlier, when these two fatty acids is out of nutritional balance in a food that is consumed, it is not healthy for the body. This is a major difference between these two types of beef and tips the scale for health in the direction of grass fed.

Grain fed beef has a lot more saturated fat than grass fed beef. Saturated fat is, of course, a known factor in heart disease development. Reducing saturated fat in the diet is a good thing and grass fed beef can help.

Grain fed beef has less CLA, or Conjugated Linoleic Acid.

CLA has been shown to reduce body fat, help with weight loss, increase metabolic rate, help to lower insulin resistance and cholesterol, among other health benefits.

Grass fed beef excels nutritionally in vitamin A, E and Beta Cartotene, over grain fed beef.

Grass fed beef is nutritionally superior to grain fed, for these reasons and more.

Learn more about why grain diets, in cattle and humans, are not healthy [here](#).

Some labeling can be deceptive too. In fact, most labeling can be which is why I suggest going to the website of the company, and asking some direct questions. For example, free range doesn't necessarily mean grass fed. It can mean that cattle are kept in small pastures and fed grain. Cage-free is one often used with chicken and it can just mean that the chickens were kept in crowded, tiny pens instead of cages.

Is grass fed REALLY grass fed? I live in a rural area where getting mostly grass fed beef is not hard to do. However, most farmers here won't hesitate to give a cow antibiotics.....or feed corn in the winter....so it's hard to know if I am ever getting pure grass fed beef. [Learn more about grass fed beef.](#)

What is a person to do? In my opinion, there is no perfect option yet that addresses all my concerns:

1. Organic grazing fields
2. 100 percent grass fed
3. No steriods, hormones or antibiotics used
4. Truly "free range" in a true pasture setting
5. Humanely processed, in a way that does not release unhealthy adrenalin into the tissues at time of death
6. Happy, healthy living situation for the extent of the entire life of the animal

When I find a company that does all those wonderful things, I'll be shouting it from the rooftops. For now, for myself, it's a process of education and choosing the best option I can find, given what I can find out about the way the meat is raised and processed. It's also a matter of communicating with the companies who raise the beef I eat. The more people express concerns over how their meat is raised and processed, the better quality will be realized.

Update, October 2008: I seem to have stopped eating all meat except fish. This was a conscious decision I'd thought about many times but had been unable to follow through with. Not sure if that will change but I still want to leave this information up for those who are still eating beef, so that they can make the most informed decision for their health and for the planet.