

UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE IN ORGANIC AND OTHER BEEF

Organic beef is certified to meet the requirements of an organic standard. In Canada, the most common standard is the national Canadian Organic Standard. These requirements are mandatory for any organic beef that is sold across provincial borders, imported or if the Canada Organic logo is used.

Farms and ranches that want to raise cattle under the Canadian Organic Standard must undergo periodic inspections by Canadian Food Inspection Agency accredited organizations called certification bodies. The name of the certification body must appear on the organic beef label. If organic beef is mixed with other ingredients, in products like sausage, at least 95% of the final product content must be organic to retain this status.

CATTLE FEED

During grazing season the Canadian Organic Standard requires that mature cattle receive 30% or more of the forage in their diets from grazing on pasture. The only exception is when animals are entering the final feeding phase when they may be in barns or pens provided they meet specified space requirements.

Like conventionally raised cattle, organically raised spends the bulk of their time on grass.

At least 60% of their daily feed must consist of hay, fresh/dried coarse plant material or silage. All feed and pastures for grazing must be certified as organic with very few exceptions.

CATTLE HEALTH

The use of antibiotics and other veterinary medications is restricted in cattle to be used for organic beef. As with people, cattle can become injured or sick and in this circumstance medical treatment will not be withheld to preserve an animal's organic status. All appropriate medications must be used to restore livestock to health if treatment methods acceptable to organic beef fail.

KNOW YOUR BEEF



Vaccines and medications to reduce pain are permitted. In special circumstances other medications can be used under the supervision of a veterinarian without affecting the organic status of an animal. The use of supplemental hormones is not permitted to enhance growth or feed efficiency.



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BEEF TASTE AND NUTRIENTS

Organic, like conventional beef, contains 14 essential nutrients. The nutritional composition of beef is influenced by cooking and preparation method, and quality grade and will vary slightly depending on the portion of the animal the beef is sourced from and even its breed, age and gender. Ultimately while many factors may influence eating quality and nutrient content, organic and conventional farming methods both provide nutritious and high quality beef. It all comes down to one's individual preferences.

NATURAL VERSUS ORGANIC

The term 'natural' does not mean the same as certified organic. Under Canadian labelling guidelines, a 'natural' or 'naturally raised' label claim is allowed only if animals were raised with minimal human intervention such as wild turkey or wild fish. Cattle raised on a farm would not be considered to be 'naturally raised' because the farmer takes care of the animals.

SAFETY

Scientific studies have not found organic beef to be safer than beef from cattle raised by conventional farming. Organic beef like all Canadian beef must meet the safety standards established by Health Canada. Although some have suggested that grass feeding practices may reduce harmful bacteria in the meat, this theory has not been proven by scientific studies.

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Canada Beef strives to present the facts around nutrition, culinary and farming practices based on the most current scientific research and tests at hand. As research on these topics is ever changing, we monitor and update these topics as necessary. Recognizing that a healthy discussion is the best way for us all to grow knowledge and understanding, we welcome your comments and conversation.



THE CANADIAN BEEF
CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

Located in Calgary, Alberta, The Canadian Beef Centre of Excellence is a showcase and focal point for all those working with Canadian beef and veal, providing education, leadership, training and idea generation.

The Centre demonstrates Canada's commitment to world class standards of quality and safety.

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