



GRAIN-FINISHED VS. GRASS FINISHED BEEF

Understanding Beef Production Practices and Their Impact on Nutrition Quality

More than 700,000 beef farmers and ranchers in the United States raise wholesome and nutritious beef. To make use of the diverse resources from their local markets, while at the same time satisfying beef consumer preferences, they may employ varying practices to responsibly raise their cattle.

You may see statements reflecting the different production practices on beef packages. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) approves these labels for beef based on specific criteria.

GRAIN-FINISHED

- Spend the majority of their lives eating grass or forage
- Spend 4-6 months at a feedyard eating a balanced diet of grains, local feed ingredients, like potato hulls or sugar beets, and hay or forage
- May or may not be given U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved antibiotics to treat, prevent or control disease and/or growth-promoting hormones

Most beef is from cattle that are raised this way and the packages likely don't have a specific label claim

GRASS-FINISHED or GRASS-FED

- Spend their whole lives eating grass or forage
- May also eat grass, forage, hay or silage at a feedyard
- May or may not be given FDA-approved antibiotics to treat, prevent or control disease and/or growth-promoting hormones

CERTIFIED ORGANIC

- Never receive any antibiotics or growth-promoting hormones
- May be either grain- or grass-finished, as long as the USDA's Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) certifies the feed is 100% organically grown
- May spend time at a feedyard

NATURALLY RAISED

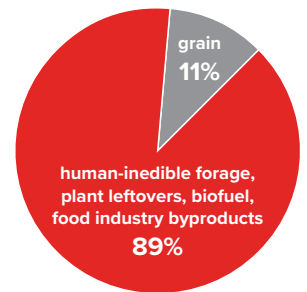
May be referred to as "never-ever"

- Never receive any antibiotics or growth-promoting hormones
- May be either grain- or grass-finished
- May spend time at a feedyard

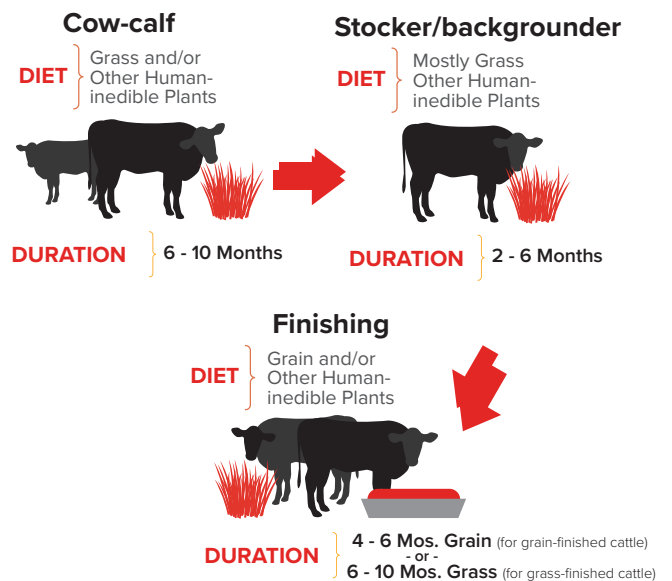
WHAT CATTLE EAT

Most cattle spend the majority of their lives grazing on pasture, and for grain-finished cattle, less than 11% of their lifetime feed is grain. All grain-finished and some grass-finished cattle spend their last months in a feedyard. Some grass-finished cattle may spend their entire lives on pasture.

Lifetime Diet of Grain-finished Cattle¹¹



TYPICAL U.S. CATTLE LIFECYCLE



IS GRASS-FINISHED MORE SUSTAINABLE?

Yes and no! Grain-finished beef has a lower carbon footprint since the cattle reach production weight at a younger age. However, grass-finished cattle can contribute to sustainability by using forage from grasslands that sequester carbon.