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## "Certified Humane" Food Label Unveiled

May 22, 2003

Herndon, VA - Citing growing consumer concern over the treatment of farm animals, Humane Farm Animal Care (HFAC), an independent nonprofit organization supported by a coalition of the nation's leading animal protection organizations, today unveiled the "Certified Humane Raised & Handled" labeling and certification program. The new "Certified Humane" label on food packaging instantly assures consumers that meat, poultry, egg or dairy products come from animals raised at facilities meeting precise, objective, and humane standards for farm animal treatment.

Supporting HFAC in its work to certify and administer the new label are the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) and The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS), as well as a number of regional and local animal welfare organizations. The goal of the new "Certified Humane" label is to give consumers the option to purchase wholesome food products at supermarkets and in restaurants that come from animals raised in a humane manner. The coalition also unveiled a website dedicated to the program at [www.certifiedhumane.com](http://www.certifiedhumane.com).

"The consolidation of the agriculture business and the creation of industry farms means too many farm animals across the country are treated inhumanely," said Adele Douglass, executive director of HFAC. "By purchasing products that carry the 'Certified Humane' label, consumers will not only be able to buy wholesome meat and dairy products with a clear conscience, but will also send a powerful message to the agriculture industry that the humane care and treatment of American farm animals should be a priority."

"The 'Certified Humane' label is based on strict animal handling standards, rigorous on-site inspections of farms in the program, and the United States Department of Agriculture verification of the entire process" said Lisa Weisberg, ASPCA Senior Vice President of Government Affairs and Public Policy. "The ASPCA is a strong supporter of this program because of its cutting edge efforts to genuinely improve the quality of life of animals raised for food in the United States." Dr. Stephen Zawistowski, ASPCA Senior Vice President, Animal Sciences and Science Advisor will serve as a member of HFAC's scientific committee.

"As more people are learning how their food is produced, they are demanding changes be made, changes that improve the lives of farm animals," said Michael Appleby, Ph.D., vice president for farm animals and sustainable agriculture for The HSUS. Appleby has a doctorate degree in animal behavior from Cambridge University and is a member of HFAC's scientific committee. "We're pleased to be part of the new 'Certified Humane' label because it will make a difference in the lives of farm animals while giving consumers the ability to make their opinion count through their purchasing decisions."

According to the USDA, over 8 billion animals are used annually in food production in the United States. To qualify as part of the program and to carry the "Certified Humane" label on food packaging,

producers and processors must meet a rigorous set of Animal Care Standards. A team of leading veterinarians and animal scientists developed these standards to ensure that producers and processors keep animals in conditions that:

- \* Offer sufficient space, shelter, and company of same-species animals to limit stress.
- \* Protect an animal's health through disease prevention.
- \* Assure good nutrition, including ready access to fresh water and a diet that maintains full health and vigor.

Under the system, added growth hormones are prohibited, and animals are raised on a regular diet of quality feed, free of antibiotics. Producers also must comply with environmental standards. Processors must comply with the American Meat Institute Standards, a higher standard for slaughtering farm animals than the Federal Humane Slaughter Act. Copies of the "Certified Humane" standards are available at [www.certifiedhumane.com](http://www.certifiedhumane.com).

Humane Farm Animal Care, an independent 501(c) 3 non-profit charity, conducts regular inspections and administers the "Certified Humane Raised & Handled" program. Participating farmers and ranchers must pass an initial inspection as well as annual re-inspection to remain part of the "Certified Humane Raised & Handled" program by qualified HFAC inspectors who are known in their fields and have expertise and education in Animal Science, Veterinary Medicine, or other relevant backgrounds. To further assure compliance, the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Services verifies the inspection process.

Humane Farm Animal Care officials pointed to the backing of many organizations in the animal welfare field, with combined outreach to millions of constituents, as evidence of the widespread support for improvements in farm animal care. Douglass stressed that, like other certifying bodies, HFAC's scientific and standards committees would render all decisions with regard to development of guidelines, assessment and audit procedures and compliance with the program. Among the organizations joining the coalition to support Humane Farm Animal Care's work today are: American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; The Humane Society of the United States; Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals; Animal People; Dubuque (Iowa) Humane Society; Hawaiian Humane Society; Humane Society of Carroll County (Maryland); Humane Society of Vero Beach & Indian River County (Florida); SPCA Erie County, NY; and, SPCA LA.

Initial producers certified to display the "Certified Humane" label on their food products include: Echo Farms Dairy (New Hampshire), Touchstone Farms Sheep and Lamb (Virginia), Deer Creek Beef (Maryland), DuBreton Natural Pork (Quebec, Canada), and Hedgeapple Farms Beef (Maryland).

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