

Best Animal-Friendly Retailer

Winner: Whole Foods



Founded in 1980 as one small store in Austin, Texas, Whole Foods Market is now the world's leading retailer of natural and organic foods, with 166 stores in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Celebrating the maxim that variety is the spice of life, Whole Foods offers an impressively wide and tempting selection of healthy vegetarian foods—cereals, snacks, juices, frozen foods, baked goods, convenience foods, soups, produce, and rows of products in bulk bins! The retailer's very own "365" brand delivers quality in grocery products as well as cruelty-free personal care and household products at competitive prices. For people on the go, Whole Foods' deli counter offers a plethora of delectable, mouth-watering vegan choices: sesame-encrusted seitan, roasted asparagus, tofu teriyaki, sweet potato cutlets, and more! No deprivation here.

Whole Foods has consistently done more for animal welfare than any retailer in the industry, requiring that its producers adhere to strict standards. Recently, Whole Foods launched the Animal Compassion Foundation. John Mackey, the chair, CEO, and cofounder of Whole Foods Market, observed, "By creating the Foundation, Whole Foods Market is pioneering an entirely new way for people to relate to farm animals—with the animals' welfare becoming the most important goal."



Runner Up: Albertson's

The country's second-largest grocery-store chain has been working with the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) to develop a comprehensive set of animal welfare guidelines to help protect animals from some of the very worst abuses that they suffer on factory farms and in slaughterhouses. Albertson's has also helped push for the development of the FMI's Animal Welfare Audit Program (AWAP), a system through which food retailers such as Albertson's can monitor their suppliers for compliance with the FMI guidelines. Furthermore, Albertson's was instrumental in demanding sweeping change and unannounced audits at AgriProcessors, Inc., the world's largest glatt kosher slaughterhouse, where an undercover PETA investigator documented horrendous abuse.

Runner Up: Safeway

Safeway worked with Albertson's to develop the FMI guidelines and to demand changes from AgriProcessors. Safeway also demanded changes and audits of Seaboard Farms after another PETA investigation uncovered horrific cruelty. Seaboard employees ended up receiving the first-ever felony cruelty-to-animals charges for abuse of farmed animals. In Canada, the company demanded the first meaningful animal welfare audits by any corporation. Safeway's commitment to animal welfare goes all the way to the top—the company's CEO, Steve Burd, personally contributes money to the animal protection charity run by Tony La Russa, manager of baseball's St. Louis Cardinals.