

Animal welfare and food safety standards

USA

VS

UK

Chlorinated chicken

Chlorine baths are used to make up for unhygienic rearing conditions. In the UK, litter must be removed and chicken houses cleaned between flocks. In the USA, litter is not always removed between flocks, so young birds can come into contact with the previous flocks' waste.¹



Legal in the USA

Banned in the UK

Poultry are exempt from all federal animal welfare laws.

Bacteria, like salmonella and campylobacter, can survive chlorine baths. This is a risk to human health.²

Animal welfare laws ensure hygiene standards are maintained.

These hygiene standards reduce the bacteria chicken are exposed to and eliminate the need for chlorine baths.

Growth promoters

In the USA, the safety of growth hormones on human health was determined only for healthy adults. In the UK, the safety was assessed for multiple age groups. One of the hormones used in the USA, and banned in the UK, has been found to cause cancer.³

In livestock, hormone treatment can cause poor health (including clinical lameness and skeletal deformities), increased aggression and chronic stress.^{4,5}



Legal in the USA

Banned in the UK

In 2011, 92.6% of feedlot cattle received a hormone implant.⁶

Only antibiotics critical to human health are banned as growth promoters.

The use of growth hormones has been banned since 1989.

The use of all antibiotics as growth promoters has been banned since 2006.

Sow stalls

Sows spend most of their adult lives in barren confinement stalls (up to 80%). Unable to turn around or walk more than one step, they become bored and depressed, chewing bars repetitively for comfort.

Compassion's work was instrumental in banning sow stalls in the UK and is working on banning farrowing crates used after sows give birth and during lactation.



Legal in the USA

Banned in the UK

Sow stalls are permitted for the entire 16 week pregnancy. Some states have banned sow stalls except for the between insemination and pregnancy confirmation but they are legal at a federal level.

Sow stalls were banned in 1999 in UK, and unlike EU legislation were not permitted for the 4 week observation period after insemination.

Barren battery cages

Battery cages do not provide hens with enough space to live or perform the most basic behaviours such as wing flapping. They are barren environments, depriving hens of a safe place to lay their eggs, substrate to forage and dustbathe in, and perches on which to rest.

Confining hens in cages can seriously affect their health and welfare, they can cause aggression such as feather pecking, and prevent the expression of natural and positive behaviours.



Legal in the USA

Move to cage-free

Standard battery cages provide 232 cm² per bird, about 1/3 of an A4 piece of paper. 95 percent of all eggs are produced using conventional battery cages.⁷

7 states have banned cages for laying hens.⁸

Barren battery cages were banned in 2012, but were replaced with 'enriched' cages. The UK currently has 57.5% of its laying hen flock in free range systems. Just over a third are still in enriched cages.

Antibiotics

The use of antibiotics can lead to bacteria developing resistance to them. Resistant bacteria become difficult to treat, leading to the development of superbugs which are a major threat to human health. The overuse of antibiotics accelerates this process, increasing the risk of superbug emergence, and threatening the efficacy of our antibiotics.⁹

Antibiotic use in animal agriculture uses an estimated 70-80% of the global consumption.¹⁰



Increased use in the USA

Decreased use in the UK

Antibiotic use in cattle is 9 to 16 times higher in the USA than in the UK (in mg/kg).¹¹

In 2018, the quantities of antibiotics sold for animal agriculture increased by 9%.¹²

Antibiotic use in pigs is almost 2 times lower in the UK than in the USA (in mg/kg).¹¹

In 2018, the quantities of antibiotics sold for animal agriculture decreased by 9%.¹³

Pesticides

Hundreds of pesticides are widely used around the world to protect agricultural crops from harmful pests. The use of some pesticides is regulated based on the risk to human health, the ecosystem and non-target animals.¹⁴

Pesticides can cause cancer, sterility, mutate DNA and disrupt hormone regulation.¹⁴

Pesticides are toxic to fish, birds, non-target plants and insects.



Poorly regulated in the USA

Highly regulated in the UK

72 of the pesticides used are banned in the EU.¹⁴

These account for 26.9% of pesticides used in 2016.¹⁴

The EU has the most comprehensive and protective pesticide regulations of all major agricultural producers.⁷

2 pesticides are used which are banned in the USA.¹⁴

Food additives

Food additives are used for many reasons, including: prolonging shelf-life, flavour enhancement and colouring. Some additives have been found to be a risk to human health and cause numerous diseases including cancer, asthma and heart problems.¹²

Chemicals used as food additives in some countries like the USA are also used in common objects such as yoga mats, packaging and rubber.



Safety can be determined by industry

Safety is determined by government

Numerous food additives are used in the USA which are banned in the EU. These are used in meat, bread, flour, drinks, snacks and ready meals.¹⁵

In the UK, additives are regulated based on their risk to human health.¹⁵

The role of UK food businesses

Public statement

UK retailers and food companies should publicly state that they will not use or sell food produced to lower standards than those that apply in the UK.

Many UK retailers have their own animal welfare standards that surpass UK legislation. It is important for these retailers to publish their standards for all categories of produce (fresh, frozen, processed & ingredient)

Build consumer engagement

Communicating with your customers will allow them to make informed choices. This can be achieved in multiple ways including marketing campaigns and labelling – including country of origin and method of production. Many retailers are committed to selling and promoting fresh British produce

Reporting on commitments

Commitments by retailers (e.g. to be cage-free by 2025) are a first step in moving towards higher welfare production systems and practices. Reporting on the transition is key for accountability and to maintain consumer trust.

COMPASSION in world farming Food Business

1) ADAS UK (2016) [Comparison of the Regulatory Framework and Key Practices in the Poultry Meat Supply Chain in the EU and USA](#) 2) Highmore et al. (2018) [DOI: 10.1128/mBio.00540-18](#) 3) EU parliament (2003) Directive 2003/74/EC 4) RSPCA Australia (2019) [What are the animal welfare impacts of using hormone growth promoters in beef cattle?](#) 5) HSUS (2016) [An HSUS report: welfare issues with the use of hormone and antibiotics in animal agriculture](#) 6) Reuter et al. (2016) [Implants and their use in beef cattle production](#) 7) CIWF (n.d) [Welfare issues for egg laying hens](#) 8) CIWF (2020) [Victory: Colorado goes cage-free!](#) 9) WHO (n.d) [About AMR](#) 10) Ritchie (2016) [How do we reduce antibiotic resistance from livestock?](#) 11) Alliance to Save Our Antibiotics (2020) [USA farm antibiotic use: a threat to UK standards?](#) 12) FDA (2019) [FDA Releases Annual Summary Report on Antimicrobials Sold or Distributed in 2018 for Use in Food-Producing Animals](#) 13) UK-VARS (2019) [UK Veterinary Antibiotic Resistance and Sales](#) 14) Donley (2019) [DOI: 10.1186/s12940-019-0488-0](#) 15) Woolsey (2015) [8 Ingredients Banned in Europe That Are Legal in the United States](#)