

FTC Challenge: Boar's Head "Humanely Raised" Labels Deceive Consumers

There is no evidence that Boar's Head raises its chickens and turkeys in accordance with animal welfare standards that exceed standard industry practices.

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, February 23, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Animal Welfare Institute (AWI) [challenged](#) Boar's Head today before the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) for using deceptive advertising practices in promoting its "humanely raised" chicken sausage and Simplicity All Natural turkey products.

There is no evidence that Boar's Head, a billion-dollar deli meat brand headquartered in Sarasota, FL, raises its chickens and turkeys in accordance with animal welfare standards that exceed standard industry practices. In reality, Boar's Head merely complies with the minimum industry animal care standards of FACTA (Farm Animal Care Training & Auditing) for its chicken products and the National Turkey Federation (NTF) for its turkey products. AWI is requesting that the FTC protect consumers, animals, and farmers by preventing Boar's Head from engaging in marketing designed to create the false impression that its chickens and turkeys are treated better than birds on any other factory farm.

These are the first FTC advertising challenges to make a case against an animal welfare claim on a meat product using the company's USDA label application, including animal care audits.

"Industry audits do not meet scientifically established standards for the humane treatment of animals," said Dena Jones, director of the farm animal program at AWI. "Such audits merely confirm compliance with baseline animal care standards and do not guarantee humane treatment for chickens or turkeys. Touting that an animal product is 'humanely raised' based on these standards is deceptive."

The BBB's National Advertising Division, in fact, has [cautioned](#) against relying on industry audits to support similar animal raising claims because consumers misconstrue these labels to mean a higher standard of care.

In 2019, following a successful AWI challenge, the BBB division recommended that Hatfield Quality Meats and its parent company, Clemens Food Group, discontinue the claim "Ethically Raised by Family Farmers Committed to a Higher Standard of Care, Governed by Third Party Animal Audits" on product packaging for Hatfield pork products. It was the first instance of the

BBB division recommending that a company remove an animal welfare claim from a meat product. AWI had argued that consumers perceived the claim to mean that Hatfield's animals receive better treatment than animals raised in conventional industrial facilities — a perception that Hatfield could not substantiate.

Consumers generally assume that the claim “humanely raised” means the producer does not subject poultry to the cruel practices used on factory farms — such as breeding for rapid growth and intensive confinement of animals in barren environments — but these practices are permissible under FACTA and NTF audit guidelines.

Four surveys commissioned by AWI in the past decade have found that an overwhelming majority of consumers believe the “humanely raised” claim should be reserved for producers that exceed minimum industry animal care standards.

However, both the NTF and the FACTA audit (which is based on the animal care guidelines of the National Chicken Council) were designed to certify producers who adhere to only minimum industry standards, according to an AWI analysis. The audits do not require 100 percent compliance and put little emphasis on essential welfare standards such as environmental enrichment, lighting, and pre-slaughter mortality rates.

In contrast, independent animal welfare certification programs generally require adherence to higher standards of care in order to justify humane raising claims that may merit charging premium prices. Processors who are allowed to base such claims on bare-minimum industry audits undercut higher-welfare farmers and have no incentive to improve their animal care practices.

“Consumers are constantly bombarded with bogus animal welfare claims on meat products, but there are better [options](#) out there that are legitimately higher welfare,” said Erin Sutherland, staff attorney for the farm animal program at AWI. “We hope that the FTC will side with consumers and stop Boar’s Head from making misleading claims about its chicken and turkey products.”

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The Animal Welfare Institute (www.awionline.org) is a nonprofit charitable organization founded in 1951 and dedicated to reducing animal suffering caused by people. AWI engages policymakers, scientists, industry, and the public to achieve better treatment of animals everywhere – in the laboratory, on the farm, in commerce, at home, and in the wild. Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for updates and other important animal protection news.

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