

Why is there no kosher meat or poultry that is certified humane?

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I. Introduction:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) website provides links to approximately half a dozen non-governmental organizations that certify products as produced from humanely raised animals.¹ Why are these certifying organizations necessary? The sad reality is that the USDA does not monitor how animals are raised on farms, despite the fact that farm animals today are treated much worse than they were fifty years ago. Given the prevalence of inhumane animal treatment on modern animal farms, why is it that to this day not a single piece of kosher meat or poultry in the United States is certified humane by any of these certifying organizations?

We begin by examining how and why animal farms have changed—for the worse—in their treatment of the animals they raise.

II. From “Family Farming” to “Factory Farming”

Family Farms. When we shop for meat and poultry in our local kosher supermarket we see neatly packed portions, perfectly visible through clear plastic wrapping. When we think about how the meat or poultry got to the supermarket shelf we might recall childhood images from Farmer Brown kiddie books: the red barn, a cow munching on grass, a yellow chicken pecking at the ground, and Farmer Brown with his overalls and straw hat, leaning against a wooden fence.

Similarly, if you were fortunate enough to have read any of the James Herriot (James Alfred Wight) books, you will recall many satisfying images of small family farms, and a tireless veterinarian who runs from one family farm to another, providing compassionate care to “all creatures

¹ See <https://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/certification-programs>.

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