

Walmart pushes stricter animal welfare policy



Hadley Malcolm, USA TODAY 4:03 p.m. EDT May 22, 2015



(Photo: Patrick T. Fallon, Bloomberg)

Walmart is calling on its food suppliers to follow stricter guidelines for animal welfare and the use of antibiotics as it aims to be more transparent with customers about where its food comes from.

The announcement Friday is the first time the retailer has established an official position on the treatment of animals used in its supply chain. As the largest grocery store in the U.S., the move by Walmart could bring more oversight and awareness of animal welfare throughout the industry.

The guidelines call for eliminating antibiotics except when medically necessary, giving animals more room to roam and ensuring pain management techniques are used during procedures like castration and killing.

Suppliers are also being asked to give reports to Walmart and the public about their antibiotic use and animal welfare every year. The guidelines apply to fresh and frozen meat, dairy, eggs and deli meat.

"Our customers have told us that they want to know more about where their food comes from, and how it was sourced," said Kathleen McLaughlin, senior vice president of sustainability, in a blog post. "As a retailer that sells products but does not produce them, we can use our strengths to influence change across our supply chain."



USA TODAY

[Walmart cites wages, stronger dollar for earnings miss](#)

[\(http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2015/05/19/walmart-earnings/27553291/\)](http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2015/05/19/walmart-earnings/27553291/)

Animal rights groups have called on Walmart in recent years to establish better policies regarding the treatment of animals. Non-profit Mercy for Animals conducted several investigations from 2012-2014 at pork farms that supply Walmart, finding that pigs were abused and confined in gestation crates for long periods of time. The group applauded Walmart, but said it should make the guidelines mandatory.

"We urge Walmart to add greater teeth to this announcement by making the new guidelines a requirement rather than a mere recommendation, and to set aggressive timelines for its suppliers to meet its expectations," MFA President Nathan Runkle said. "While there is still work to be done, Walmart's announcement is one of the most sweeping animal welfare policies ever adopted by a major food company."

Gail Hansen, a public health veterinarian for The Pew Charitable Trusts, said Walmart's call for limiting the use of antibiotics is "very positive" given the growing public health concern of antibiotic resistance.

"Too many antibiotics are being used both in human and animal medicine," she says. "Since Walmart is the largest grocery store, the largest meat seller, (the policy will) start to give people a handle on actually how the antibiotics are used. So you can make better policies on how to be good stewards of antibiotics."

The Humane Society released a statement supporting Walmart's announcement.

"Walmart's animal welfare announcement is a game-changing progress and signals to agribusiness that the era of confining farm animals is ending," said President and CEO Wayne Pacelle. "Battery cages, gestation crates and veal crates – along with other long-standing practices that immobilize animals – have a short shelf life in our food system."

states in America	market share	lows
-------------------	--------------	------



Read or Share this story: <http://usat.ly/1SnQAth>