



February 16, 2010

We have three levels of humane treatment standards: the USDA standards, the USDA-Organic standards, and the Animal Welfare Approved standards. All three require in-person inspection, record keeping, ongoing training, and open access to the inspectors (ie, random inspection).

The USDA has an animal welfare officer who inspects each facility to ensure humane handling of the animals. In addition, our on-site inspector must observe the health of each animal in the pens prior to harvest, then observe the actual slaughter. There is no tolerance for anything other than a quick, painless death.

On top of the USDA, we have the USDA Organic Standards. Built into the organic rules are rules for humane treatment of the animals, from the farm through the harvest. Our certifier, the State of Iowa, independently verifies the humane treatment of the animals from the time they are dropped off by the farmer through harvest. A plant cannot be certified as an organic processor without specific training in humane handling.

Above both of these we have our Animal Welfare Approved certification. This is the highest standard we are aware of and we have passed both of our on-site inspections. This certification requires additional training, a quiet, respectful method of handling and slaughter, and clean, safe conditions for the animals during the unloading and housing. Our certification is attached (we are waiting for the new letter confirming our passage of the most recent audit that was conducted last week).

We completely redesigned the pens to make the unloading safer and more natural for the animals. We follow the theories of Temple Grandin in our design so there is a natural path for the animals to follow without shadows or barriers that might spook them. We do not permit shock prods. We have prohibited certain truckers and farmers from delivering their animals to us when they refused to comply with our humane standards. We attempt to ensure a reverence for the act of slaughter by acknowledging (including by a sign) that by the death of the animals we gain life.

Beyond what we do in-house, our farmers are all certified organic (which has the humane handling requirement in the certification, we KNOW our farmers). Whether it is through our grassfed line or our organics, all our farmers are a pasture based operation where the animals are largely left to themselves. Shelter, proper nutrition and humane loading are all part of their operations.

I hope that helps. Let me know if you need anything more.

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