

# Eat to Your Advantage®

## Thoughtful Questions to Ask a Meat Farmer

*After each question, I list some of the keywords you want to be listening for in their answers.*

- **How do you raise your animals?** (This is a broad question to open the conversation.)
  - Listen for—pastured, free range, rotational grazing.
- **Where do your animals spend their time?** (You are trying to determine how much time they spend housed, if any. Some animals need some protection from predators and the worst of the weather. What you want to make sure is that the animals have plenty of opportunities to spend their days grazing on fresh pasture.)
  - Listen for—pastured, free range, chicken tractor (mobile henhouse), rotational grazing.
- **Do you use rotational grazing?** If so, how often do you move them? (This is a regenerative practice that moves grazing animals often to ensure they have quality pasture and optimize soil quality. If they say yes, you are trying to determine how often they are rotated to new pasture.)
  - Listen for—yes, and ideally, it's done every day or every few days.
- **What do you feed your animals?** If grain, is it non-GMO? Pesticide free?
  - Listen for—cows and sheep are 100 percent grass-fed, and chicken/pigs have some non-GMO, pesticide-free grain.
- **If you feed hay, is anything sprayed on it?**
  - You want to hear no.
- **What kinds of medications do you use with animals?**
  - My personal belief is that antibiotics (as needed for illness) are ok, but they should not be used as a routine part of production to drive growth or to keep animals in unhealthy environments. To be certified organic, an animal can never have been administered antibiotics.
- **Who is your processor, and why did you choose them?**
  - Listen for—cleanliness, attention to detail, humane practices. If you are following a special diet and/or have allergies/sensitivities, make sure the processor can give you what you need. I am sensitive to peppers, and that is something often found in brats and sausages.
- **Do you ever offer farm visits?**
  - It's ideal to see the farm your food comes from, and many farmers have customer events or open-door policies. To me, it's not a deal-breaker.