

# The Beef Industry



By: Max Fowle

# What is the Beef Industry?

The beef industry is the production, packing and distribution of meat from cows. Calves are born, fed and grow until they are physically mature enough to be slaughtered. Their meat is stripped and transported to retail and supermarkets for customers to purchase.



# How did we used to practice this industry?

Before factory farming took hold in the 1960s, cattle were raised on family farms or ranches around the country. Young calves were born in the spring and spent their first months suckling milk and grazing on grass. The calves grew to maturity at a natural pace, reaching market weight at 2 or 3 years old. After the animals were slaughtered, the carcasses were kept cool for a couple weeks to enhance flavour and tenderness. The meat was then shipped in large cuts to meat markets.



# How do we practice it now?

Today's beef industry process brings cattle to slaughter in just one or two years. This reduces the nutritional value, stresses the animals, pollutes the environment and exposes consumers to a long list of unwanted chemicals. When calves are born, they spend their first months grazing on grass, the same way calves have been raised for generations. When they reach 500 to 700 pounds, they are shipped to auction barns where they are sold to new owners, and trucked to distant feedlots. Once they arrive at their feedlot, the cows are dehorned, branded and tagged. Then they are dewormed and vaccinated against various diseases. Lastly, the calves are given pellets that contain growth promoting steroid hormones. Calves are fed grain which helps them grow quicker. Once they reach physical maturity they are stripped of their meat by a process called Advanced Meat Recovery. The beef products are then transported from the slaughter house to the beef processing manufacturer, and then to retailers and super markets.



# How is this industry impacting the environment?

The beef industry negatively impacts the environment in many ways. The land required for raising cattle is substantial. Crops needed to feed the cows mean more land being used. The more forests we cut down. They also need land for the calves to graze in the grass. Cows grazing can affect the soil and in turn releases carbon into the atmosphere. The beef industry is one of the leading causes of greenhouse gas emissions and pollution in the atmosphere. The growing demand for beef is contributing to significant biodiversity loss as it is a driver of deforestation and habitat destruction.



# What can we do to reduce our impact? Sustainable alternatives?

We can choose beef from cattle that were 100% grass fed. These cows are raised on their natural diet of grass from birth to market, and are not routinely given antibiotics or hormones. As well as not being fed grain. You can also stop eating as much beef products slowly. This lowers the demand for beef and will reduce the supply. Going vegan would help dramatically but start slow and reduce your beef consumption. If we lower the demand of beef, producers won't have to try to speed up the process of the beef industry and we won't be hurting the environment as badly..





# Websites

[www.motherearthnews.com](http://www.motherearthnews.com)

What you need to know about the beef industry

[www.peta.org](http://www.peta.org)

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