

# Food Facts & Fallacies

## What Everyone 'Knows' About Meat Isn't Really So

(NAPSA)—A recent Harris Interactive poll revealed that some myths about meat have been popularized in books and movies and have taken hold among consumers—but these myths have little basis in fact. Here's a look at the truth:

**Myth:** Hormone use in poultry and pork production is a health concern.

**Fact:** Federal law prohibits hormone use in poultry and in pig production. They are not used to produce chicken, turkeys or pigs—ever—in the United States. Between 1980 and 2005, changes in genetics and feeding programs have reduced “days to harvest”—the time required to grow pigs and chickens to full weight—by 15 percent and increased the amount of lean meat by 45 percent. This growth has nothing to do with hormones because they are simply not used.

**Myth:** It's best to get “hormone-free” beef.

**Fact:** All living things—plants and animals—naturally produce hormones. While meat can be produced without added hormones, it cannot be “hormone free.” Hormones such as estrogen used to make some cattle add weight and produce meat faster is used at levels that are a fraction of what is found in cabbages and soybeans or what the human body produces naturally. Experts say beef produced with or without added hormones is safe and nutritious.

**Myth:** Antibiotic use in livestock production is a health concern.



**Federal data show meat and poultry produced in the U.S. has never been safer.**

**Fact:** Antibiotics are given to livestock for the same reasons they are given to people: to help treat and prevent disease. They are regulated and approved by the Food and Drug Administration, administered under the supervision of veterinarians and must clear an animal's system prior to harvest. A livestock producer is ethically bound to ensure the health of his livestock and antibiotics can play an important role in ensuring health.

**Myth:** Meat is not as safe today as it was in the past.

**Fact:** Experts say—and data show—that U.S. meat and poultry is among the safest in the world. All raw agricultural products, whether green beans, potatoes, spinach or meat, contain bacteria. Meat and poultry plants use the latest food safety technology to reduce bacteria levels as much as possible in the plant and then urge careful handling and thorough cooking of their products. Federal data from the U.S. Department of Agriculture document steep declines in bacteria on meat and poultry.