



# Animal Welfare

## Raising Animals Responsibly

The standard animal husbandry practice that's been used for centuries is called selective breeding, where chickens have been bred for certain performance attributes, including white meat yield and feed efficiency, as well as for their health, skeletons, strength of legs, appropriate growth rate and the way they walk.

Though not widely grown in the U.S., there are breeds that grow at a slower rate — requiring an additional two weeks to reach a similar weight. What we do know is that “slow-growing” breeds come with an impact to the environment. These breeds are far less sustainable and are not a long-term option for feeding our planet's rapidly expanding population.

A recent [study](#) suggests that if just one-third of the U.S. chicken industry switched to slower-growing breeds, nearly 1.5 billion more birds would need to be grown each year to make up for the shortfall in meat. That means we would need almost 3.5 million more acres to grow the crops to feed them. More fuel and tires for trucks to supply the additional feed. Over 5 billion more gallons of water to hydrate them. So, it's not necessary to change the breed of a bird to meet welfare standards. It's about raising healthy birds responsibly. Balancing centuries-old farming practices with the needs of our planet so we can make quality protein available to a growing world population.

Physical alterations are not performed on our broiler chickens. For poultry kept on farms for longer periods, such as breeding chickens and turkeys, certain procedures may be necessary for the long-term welfare of the flock. For example, we beak condition our turkey poults with microwave technology to reduce the risk of injury, but we don't toe condition our turkeys. At the beginning of 2019, we also stopped the practice of de-snooding our turkeys. Procedures for chicken breeding flocks may include beak conditioning and toenail trimming, which are performed in accordance with the best animal welfare practices.

The goal of these procedures is to reduce injuries among birds and to promote health and welfare of the flocks. These procedures are closely monitored and performed by trained personnel using specialized equipment in the hatchery on day-old poultry. Our chickens and turkeys are not genetically modified or cloned.

### Cattle & Hogs

We encourage the use of National Cattlemen's Beef Association and National Pork Board Best Management Practices for age and weight when practices such as dehorning, tail docking and castration are performed. Verification that these guidelines are followed is completed through our FarmCheck® program audits on the farm. We make reasonable efforts to avoid buying any genetically engineered livestock for our beef and pork processing operations.