

Why choose chicken?

However you look at chicken, the benefits stack up.

Chicken is a versatile and delicious choice - ready to grill, barbecue, roast, stir-fry, microwave, poach or sauté - and plays an important part in the many international cuisines that now make up the Australian diet. At the family table, in restaurants or in takeaway meals, chicken is a popular and tasty choice that's easy to prepare - plus all chicken sold in Australia is grown in Australia.

Nutritionally it stacks up too - chicken is low fat and a significant source of your daily requirements of protein, niacin, B6, B12, vitamin D, iron and zinc.

And it's easy on your wallet, as an economical choice compared to other meats. Is it any wonder

that about 33 per cent of Australians eating chicken do so at least three times a week*, with chicken now rivalling beef in the Australian diet?

Chicken plays a growing part in the Australian diet. Once just for special occasions, chicken is now an everyday choice.

QUICK FACTS

- The Australian chicken meat industry employs 40,000 people throughout Australia.
- Meat chickens are grown on around 820 commercial chicken farms around Australia.
- The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) forecasts suggest that Australians will eat about 35.9 kg of chicken in 2005-06, compared to 36.7 kg of beef and veal, 13.2 kg of lamb and mutton, and 22.2 kg of pig meat over the same period. Chicken consumption has increased sixfold from 5.9 kg in 1965.
- The chicken meat sold in Australia is all grown in Australia, as importing raw chicken meat is banned. The only chicken meat imported into Australia is in canned/retorted products manufactured overseas.

- Most chicken meat is consumed locally, with less than 2% exported.
- Approximately 470 million meat chickens will be processed in 2005-06, weighing 748,000 tonnes.
- ABARE forecasts that the poultry meat industry's gross value of production will be \$1.408 billion in 2005-06**. The ACMF estimates the chicken industry's retail value at \$2.5 billion.

* Source: Colmar Brunton, February 2006, n = 1800 chicken consumers.

** Source: ABARE Australian Commodities, Vol 13 No 1, March Quarter 2006

Australia's chicken meat industry

- Australia has one of the most efficient chicken meat producing and processing industries in the world.
- The chicken meat sold in Australia is all grown in Australia, as importing raw chicken meat is banned for quarantine reasons.
- Australia's chicken meat industry is structured very differently to other rural industries. Instead of a complex supply chain from the farm to the shop, the chicken meat industry is a vertically integrated industry. This means that individual companies generally own almost all aspects of production - breeding farms, multiplication farms, hatcheries, feed mills, some meat chicken growing farms, and processing plants.
- About 80% of Australia's meat chickens are provided by three large privately owned Australian companies - Inghams Enterprises, Barter Enterprises and Baiada Poultry - with the balance supplied by seven medium-sized companies and a myriad of smaller processors. Most of Australia's meat chickens are grown from day old chicks to the day of processing by around 820 growers under contract to these companies.
- The major companies own feed mills and are buyers of significant quantities of grain and other ingredients. Feed has been formulated to meet the very precise nutritional needs of each breed of chicken at each stage of its growth. Every load of grain is rigorously tested to ensure that it meets key nutritional and quality standards.
- Several companies have their own research farms, investigating matters such as nutritional needs, feed and disease control.
- Some companies also have laboratories to test samples for common bacteria and poultry diseases, while other companies out-source this work. The larger companies also have dedicated product research and development facilities.
- Australia's meat chickens come from breeding lines developed by specialist international breeding companies. The birds have been developed over generations through selective breeding to put on meat quickly and efficiently, resist disease and develop a robust constitution. The great grandparents of the chicken we buy in shops are imported as fertile eggs from overseas. The chicks hatched from these eggs are carefully checked and monitored over several months in a quarantine station to ensure that no disease is brought into Australia.

- Chickens are raised in large sheds with bedding materials such as rice hulls spread across the floor. Sheds are purpose-designed and, increasingly, have sophisticated computer-driven systems to monitor and manage temperature, air flow and air quality. Chickens have constant access to water and food.
- Chicken growing and processing is an efficient, low-waste industry. At farm level, used bedding (called litter) can be on-sold for fertiliser. In processing plants, all parts of the chicken are used, either in products for human consumption or as pet food.
- Chicken processing plants are large, highly mechanised operations, with much of the reduced cost of chicken for consumers due to ever-increasingly automated processing. Australia's largest poultry processing establishment processes an average 630,000 birds per week.
- All significant poultry processing operations in Australia have internationally recognised HACCP (Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point) programs in place to manage food safety risks.



BUSTING THE MYTHS

- MYTH: Chicken meat comes from egg chickens when they have stopped laying**
No! Chicken meat comes from specially bred meat chickens. Comparing chickens bred for meat with those for eggs is like comparing a toy poodle to a standard poodle - they are both poodles but they are selectively bred to grow to different sizes and have different temperaments.
- MYTH: Chickens are fed hormones**
The use of hormones (or steroids) was banned more than 40 years ago - and this ban is strictly enforced in Australia and around the world. Advertising that claims 'no added hormones' is not differentiating its product, but instead stating an industry-wide regulation.
- MYTH: Meat chickens are fed something unnatural to make them grow faster**
Most of the change in how birds grow is thanks to specialist breeders overseas, who have selectively bred birds to grow more quickly and efficiently. Intensive research into chicken's precise nutritional requirements, better animal husbandry and housing and improvements in healthcare have also contributed to improving bird growth and to reducing the time it takes to get chickens to market size.
- MYTH: Meat chickens are raised in cages**
Meat chickens are not caged, but are raised in large sheds where they live free to roam on the floor. Some sheds, for free-range chickens, have an outdoor space as well.

ACMF - representing industry

The Australian Chicken Meat Federation (ACMF) is the peak coordinating body for Australia's chicken meat industry, representing both growers and processors. Its members are the five State Chicken Meat Councils (NSW, VIC, QLD, SA, WA), the Australian Chicken Growers' Council and the Australian Poultry Industries Association.

It aims to:

- promote and protect the interests of the chicken meat industry
- conduct and support research on behalf of the industry
- represent the industry on appropriate committees, boards and commissions
- liaise with the government on behalf of the industry, as the industry representative body recognised by the Australian government.

ACMF represents the industry in areas such as international trade, quarantine, animal health, biosecurity, food standards and food safety and animal welfare.

ACMF also provides strategic direction to research and development by providing research management services to the chicken meat program delivered by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation.



Executive Director
Dr Andreas Dubs

Dr Dubs has worked at the interface between government and industry in Australia, France and Germany, with a particular interest in scientific research and the commercialisation of its outcomes.

Andreas now represents the chicken meat industry as executive director of the Australian Chicken Meat Federation. He represents chicken producers and growers on a wide range of government and industry committees dealing with matters including animal health, food safety, quarantine and international trade.

While previously working for the Australian Government, his achievements include running national science and technology programs, developing and implementing the Co-operative Research Centres Program and establishing the AusIndustry R&D Start and Major National Research Facilities Programs.

He has also worked on business environment issues such as technical barriers to trade, representing Australia in APEC and WTO forums.

Andreas has managed the commercialisation of technology developed by the University of Stuttgart, Germany and the Australian National University.



Deputy Executive Director, ACMF, and Research and Development Manager, RIRDC Chicken Meat Program
Dr Vivien Kite

Dr Kite has extensive experience in the chicken meat industry, and has contributed significantly to the collaboration between the industry, government and the research community in Australia for over 15 years.

With a research background and having undertaken postdoctoral research for the Commission of the European Communities in the UK in the mid '80s, one of Vivien's primary responsibilities is to manage the Australian chicken meat industry's national research and development program, through her position as an external R&D Manager for the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC).

One of her major achievements was managing the National Newcastle Disease Survey for the Australian poultry industry in 2000 which, at the time, was probably the largest structured pathogen surveillance program ever undertaken in the poultry industry anywhere in the world.

Vivien's clear strengths in research management and extensive knowledge of the industry come to the fore in her involvement in government and industry committees dealing with issues including animal health, animal welfare, research and food safety.



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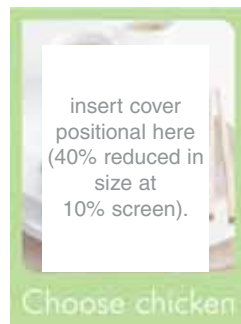
Chook Infoline - 1300 4 CHOOKs

The Chicken Meat Federation's Consumer Information Line, "Chook Infoline", was established in 2006 to help answer consumer questions about chicken meat and the chicken meat industry in Australia.

Chook Infoline aims to address some of the myths and misconceptions about how chickens are raised in Australia - with answers provided in a convenient, contemporary way. This is in line with the industry's aim to be completely open about its practices, as it engages in world 'best practice' for the raising, growing and processing of chickens.

Chook Infoline provides information about everything from selective breeding to shed farming. It debunks popular myths and gives consumers a chance to hear the facts.

1300 4 CHOOKs (1300 424 665) is available from 9:00am - 5:00pm EST and is answered by specially trained operators who can answer questions about chicken meat (e.g. nutrition, food handling, cooking and food safety) and about the chicken industry and how it operates. Callers may also request industry policies on important issues like antibiotics or GM feed via email. They may also be directed to the industry website for more information on www.chicken.org.au



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Industry position on key issues

All chickens in Australia have been produced using traditional selective breeding. As there are no genetically modified (GM) chickens in Australia, consumers are not eating GM food when eating chicken meat.

CHICKENS ARE NOT GENETICALLY MODIFIED

Some consumers are concerned that some ingredients of livestock feed may come from GM plants, such as soybean meal or maize, cottonseed or cottonseed meal, some amino acids, selected feed enzymes, or selected vitamins.

The Australian chicken meat industry endorses the findings of regulators and the broader scientific community that GM animal feed does not represent a safety concern for consumers. As animals break down their food when they digest it, the composition of meat from chickens fed GM feed is the same as that of chickens fed non-GM feed.

However in recognition of the concerns of some consumers, Australia's three largest chicken meat processors, representing over 80% of chicken meat production, have committed to using their best endeavours to source non-GM ingredients for their feed. Feed ingredients must meet quality standards, be available in substantial quantities and be economically sustainable.

HORMONES ARE NOT ADMINISTERED TO CHICKENS

By regulation, no hormones (or steroids) are administered to meat chickens under any circumstance. There is no basis for any food safety concern regarding added hormones in chicken meat.

Contrary to urban legend, administering hormones to chickens in Australia has been illegal for over 40 years. The government's National Residue Survey regularly confirms that hormones are not used by testing meat on a regular basis.

METICULOUS CARE FOR CHICKENS' WELFARE AND STRONG ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE GO HAND IN HAND

Ensuring chickens are well fed, healthy and comfortable is in the best interests of both birds and growers.

In caring for chickens appropriately, the industry:

- maintains respect for the birds, by ensuring they do not suffer
- ensures flocks grow efficiently and are not damaged
- recognises and respects community expectations regarding the humane treatment of livestock farmed specifically for consumption.

Commercial meat chickens are raised in large, clean, temperature regulated sheds. Free range chickens have access to barn yards as well as their shed. Meat chickens are never raised in cages.

Concern for bird welfare is backed by government and industry standards which ensure birds are kept comfortable and are treated humanely. This includes managing factors such as temperature, humidity, air flow and air quality, how they are handled and managing flock health. It also covers providing birds with food, water and adequate space and shelter. These factors have an important effect on both the welfare of the birds and the overall efficiency of the farming operation.

Chickens receive prompt and appropriate attention to prevent and treat disease. Sick or injured birds that cannot be adequately or successfully treated are culled quickly and humanely so that they do not suffer. Industry participants must ensure that their birds do not suffer any unnecessary pain, distress, fear or physical injury.

While meat chickens are reared and processed specifically for human consumption, the industry is committed to ensuring that this is done humanely.



ANTIBIOTICS USED RESPONSIBLY

Chicken meat produced in Australia is healthy and nutritious, and eating it does not expose consumers to either antibiotic residue, or bacteria resistant to antibiotics used in human medicine.

This is because, firstly, antibiotics are used in a way that ensures that the meat is free of residues, and secondly, because antibiotics are used in a prudent way to minimise the development of resistance. It should also be noted that any bacteria that may be on raw meat, whether resistant to antibiotics or not, will be rendered harmless through the normal cooking process.

The Australian Chicken Meat Federation endorses the use of antibiotics in farm animals in two important ways:

- therapeutic agents (used to treat a bacterial infection)
- prophylactic (preventative) agents (used to prevent disease occurring in healthy animals).

As in human medicine, it is desirable to limit the use of antibiotics in order to limit the opportunity for bacteria to develop resistance to these compounds.

The antibiotic policy of the Australian Chicken Meat Federation states that:

- Antibiotics must not be used to promote growth
- Antibiotics are only to be used for therapeutic or preventative treatments against serious diseases such as necrotic enteritis.
- Antibiotics that are considered important for human use are not to be used in preventative treatments of chickens.
- Antibiotics must be used under veterinary supervision and according to good veterinary practice.
- Withholding periods (time between last use of an antibiotic and earliest possible slaughter) are designed to ensure that there is no antibiotic residue in chicken meat. The chicken meat industry strictly observes the withholding periods set by regulatory authorities.
- The industry also supports the Australian Government's National Residue Survey, which conducts regular independent checks of residues of antibiotics in chicken meat in Australia and consistently shows that chicken meat in Australia does not contain residues of antibiotics.

AVIAN INFLUENZA (BIRD FLU) - IT'S NOT IN YOUR FOOD

What you need to know about avian influenza:

- There is no avian influenza in Australian chickens.
- You are unlikely to catch it from chickens. While some strains of avian influenza found overseas can occasionally infect people, this is rare and requires very close physical interaction with infected birds. In Australia, the nature of our animal husbandry practices makes this kind of contact extremely unlikely.
- You can't catch it from food. Properly cooked chicken meat cannot transmit avian influenza. As well, any infected flock would be destroyed - diseased flocks would not be processed for consumption by people or animals.
- Australia does not import chickens. Quarantine restrictions are in place on importing birds and there is a complete ban on importing raw chicken meat.
- Birds get avian flu, people get human flu. It's not the same disease.

So what is the concern about?

Avian influenza is a common disease generally passed between birds, and occasionally to humans, although it is quite difficult for the virus to make the leap to humans. The concern is that the H5N1 strain of the avian influenza virus may mutate from a disease readily passed between birds to one that can be easily passed between people, potentially leading to an influenza pandemic.

How will it reach Australia? Can it be stopped?

Avian influenza viruses are often found in wild birds which can spread infection across wide geographic areas as they migrate. Australia's "island" status, the high standards set by AQIS (Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service) and industry biosecurity measures provide significant protection against disease entering local flocks.

AUSTRALIA IS WELL PREPARED TO PREVENT AND COMBAT ANY EMERGENCY ANIMAL DISEASE OUTBREAK, SUCH AS AVIAN INFLUENZA H5N1

The chicken meat industry takes the threat of avian influenza and other emergency animal diseases very seriously, and has been working closely with federal and state governments for some time to prepare for the possibility of avian influenza entering Australia. Extensive systems, plans and training programs are in place to maintain our preparedness.

Australia already has a good track record for managing avian influenza - five outbreaks of different avian influenza strains have been quickly and successfully eradicated, the most recent in 1997. It has also managed successfully other diseases of which Australia is normally free, for example Newcastle Disease.

In the event of an outbreak, the spread of disease would be prevented by destroying birds humanely on farm. Additional biosecurity measures - such as controlling movement to and from an infected area - would provide further control. These techniques have quickly and successfully eradicated disease outbreaks in the past.

FARM BIOSECURITY MEANS HEALTHY CHICKENS AND WHOLESOME MEAT

"Biosecurity" refers to measures which aim to limit the introduction and spread of disease. Australian growers have robust biosecurity systems designed to protect our birds and contribute to providing safe food.

Biosecurity controls are in place to manage the risks of disease spreading between properties and between sheds on the same property. They take into account the movement of people and trucks, management of rodents, wild animals and wild birds, and supplies of food and water.

Specific measures include water sanitation, rodent control, use of disinfectant footbaths, shed cleaning, shed design, hand washing, control of visitors, and much more.

Biosecurity measures maintain barriers between wild birds and chickens and their feed and water. This is the single most important factor in reducing the risk of an avian influenza outbreak among chickens, and in preventing the spread of disease.

Farmers are guided by the National Biosecurity Manual for Contract Chicken Growers. More information is available on the ACMF website www.chicken.org.au.

Chicken meat - it's good for you

Chicken is a healthy, nutritious choice in the Australian diet - it's low in fat, low in cholesterol and an excellent source of protein.

- While fat is an essential part of a healthy diet, many Australians eat too much fat. That's where chicken comes in. Chicken is low in fat, particularly of the less-healthy saturated fat, and contains a high percentage of unsaturated fatty acids which are important in reducing cholesterol levels in the diet.
- Chicken is an excellent source of lean protein, containing all the amino acids essential to the body, making it a "complete" source of protein. 100g of chicken provides around half the recommended daily intake of protein.
- Chicken is rich in minerals including zinc, iron, magnesium and phosphorous.
- Chicken provides valuable quantities of B group vitamins, including riboflavin, thiamin and niacin.

For the healthiest choice, chicken should be drained, cooked thoroughly, stored properly and baked or grilled rather than fried. Fat content can be reduced even further by removing the skin.

NUTRITIONAL COMPARISONS PER 100G OF DIFFERENT MEAT			
Meat type, raw	Energy value(kcal)	Fat (g)	Protein (g)
Chicken (skinless breast meat)	106	1.1	24.0
Chicken (meat and skin)	201	13.8	19.1
Pork (trimmed lean, average)	123	4.0	21.8
Pork (loin chop, 30% fat)	270	18.6	21.7
Beef (trimmed lean, average)	136	5.1	22.5
Beef (mince)	225	16.2	9.7
Lamb (trimmed lean, average)	156	8.3	20.5
Lamb (chump steaks, lean and fat)	222	16.4	18.6

Source: The Royal Society of Chemistry and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, 1995



Simple rules for food handling

Chicken meat in Australia is grown in Australia. Provided it is prepared and cooked according to Food Safety Information Council guidelines, chicken meat is a safe and healthy source of protein.

Here's how to ensure the food you're eating is safe:

- All chicken meat products are safe to eat provided they have been cooked thoroughly - so that the juices run clear and the meat is no longer pink. As a guide, your meat thermometer should indicate 75°C at the thickest part of the meat. Cooking poultry to this temperature kills any bacteria that may be in or on the raw product.
- If you are served undercooked poultry in a restaurant, send it back for further cooking.
- Keep hot food steaming hot.
- Keep cold food refrigerated.
- Keep raw and cooked foods separate and clean cutting boards thoroughly.
- Keep kitchen and utensils clean.
- Wash hands with soap and dry thoroughly both before and after handling food.

What are the risks?

Common bacteria - salmonella, campylobacter and E. coli - may be present on chicken and other raw meat and can cause food poisoning. These risks are eliminated by cooking food properly. Without a microscope, you won't see any bacteria on chicken or any raw meat, so you must handle it as if it is present.

Regular testing confirms that consumers are not exposed to antibiotic residues when eating chicken meat, and that hormones are not added in chicken meat production.

For more information

Chicken Meat Industry

Australian Chicken Meat Federation
www.chicken.org.au

Nutrition

Nutrition Australia
www.nutritionaustralia.org

Food Safety

Food Safety Information Council
www.foodsafety.asn.au/
Food Standards Australia New Zealand
www.foodstandards.gov.au

Avian Influenza

World Health Organization
www.who.int/avianinfluenza
Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
www.daff.gov.au/birdflu

Australian Department of Health
www.health.gov.au/pandemic

Hormones

National Residue Survey
www.daff.gov.au

Genetic Modification

Office of the Gene Technology Regulator
www.ogtr.gov.au
Biotechnology Australia
www.biotechnology.gov.au

Biosecurity

National Biosecurity Manual
Contract Meat Chicken Farming
www.chicken.org.au/files/biosecuritychicken_farming.pdf

Antibiotics

Phillips et al (2004). Does the use of antibiotics in food animals pose a risk to human health? A critical review of published data, J. Antimicrob. Chemother. 2004 53: 28-52

Casewell (2004). The European ban on growth-promoting antibiotics and emerging consequences for human and animal health. J. Antimicrob. Chemother., Aug 2003; 52: 159-161.

The use of antibiotics in food-producing animals: antibiotic-resistant bacteria in animals and humans. Report of the Joint Expert Advisory Committee on Antibiotic Resistance (JETACAR), October 1999.
www.health.gov.au/pubs/jetacar.pdf

EAGAR Importance Rating and Summary of Antibiotic Uses in Humans in Australia
www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/_files/antirate.pdf

National Residue Survey
www.daff.gov.au/nrs

Animal Welfare

Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Domestic Poultry 4th Ed
www.publish.csiro.au/nid/18/pid/3451.htm

Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Land Transport of Poultry
www.publish.csiro.au/pid/1503.htm

Model Code of Practice for the Welfare of Animals: Livestock at Slaughtering Establishments
www.publish.csiro.au/pid/2975.htm

Jones et al. (2005) Environmental and management factors affecting the welfare of chickens on commercial farms stocked at five densities. Poultry Science 85: 1156-1165.

Australian Animal Welfare Strategy
www.daff.gov.au/aaws

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