



AUSTRALIAN CHICKEN MEAT FEDERATION INC.

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MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

CHICKEN MYTHS KEEP FATTENING THE AUSTRALIAN CHOOK.....

Chicken remains one of the most popular meats on the Australian menu, with one in three Australians eating chicken at least three times a week.¹ Despite its popularity, this home grown, nutritional and tasty meal choice still suffers from a lack of consumer understanding with consumer concern surrounding today's chicken meat industry and its practices.

Australia has one of the most efficient chicken meat producing and processing industries in the world, but there are still many misconceptions about what has lead to a bigger and plumper chicken than 20 years ago.

HORMONES:

Are growth hormones added to Australian chicken?

No. By regulation, no hormones (or steroids) are administered to chickens under any circumstance. Contrary to urban legend, the administration of hormones to chickens both in Australia and around the world has been illegal for over 40 years. The government's National Residue Survey regularly tests meat to confirm that hormones are not used. Advertising that claims 'no added hormones' is not differentiating its product, but instead stating an industry-wide regulation.

GENETIC MODIFICATION:

Is Australian chicken genetically modified?

No. All chickens in Australia are 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.

Is GM feed used?

Some consumers are concerned that ingredients in livestock feed may come from GM plants, such as soybean meal, corn, cottonseed or cottonseed meal. 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. Because 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.

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

Reference 1: Research conducted by Colmar Brunton (Feb 2006)

TRADITIONAL/SELECTIVE BREEDING:

What is meant by traditional/selective breeding?

Traditional or selective breeding is a method of developing plants or animals with desired traits (genetic characteristics) by breeding together animals with the desired trait, so that the trait is reinforced. This method, sometimes called conventional breeding or traditional breeding, has been practiced for thousands of years.

Is all chicken meat sold in Australia grown in Australia?

Yes. The chicken meat sold in Australia is all grown in Australia, as importing raw chicken meat is banned for quarantine reasons. From your local takeaway or supermarket to your 5-star restaurant you'll only find Australian chicken. The only possible exceptions are some well cooked chicken meat in imported canned soup or pet food.

ANTIBIOTICS:

How are antibiotics used in chicken? Do they make chickens bigger?

Chicken meat produced in Australia is healthy and nutritious, and eating it does not expose consumers to either antibiotic residues, 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. Withholding periods, designed to ensure that there is no residue left in the meat at the time of processing, are observed at all times. Secondly, 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, are killed through normal cooking.

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

- *therapeutic agents* - used to treat bacterial infection
- *preventative agents* - used to prevent disease occurring in healthy animals.

The Australian Chicken Meat Federation has written to registrants of antibiotics in Australia to request a removal of historical growth promotion claims because the product is no longer used in the poultry industry for that purpose.

INDUSTRY FACTS:

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.

1300 4 CHOOKs (1300 424 665) is available from 9:00am – 5:00pm EST and is answered by specially trained operators. Callers may also be provided with industry policies on important issues like antibiotics or GM feed. They may also be directed to the industry website for more information on www.chicken.org.au

The Australian Chicken Meat Federation represents all chicken meat processors and meat chicken growers across Australia.

This release was prepared by Reed Weir Communications on behalf of the Australian Chicken Meat Industry. For more information or to arrange an interview with Andreas Dubs please call Andreas Dubs, Executive Director, Australian Chicken Meat Federation on M: 0432 925 933 or Reed Weir Office T: (02) 9436 2088
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