

PORK STANDARDS



Firsthand Foods sells local, fresh, pasture-raised pork produced by a network of small-scale producers who are all members of the North Carolina Natural Hog Growers Association. Our pork producers abide by these standards:

LOCAL

Our pork producers live and farm in Eastern North Carolina.

HUMANE

All of our pork producers are certified to meet the rigorous standards for farm animal welfare and environmental sustainability established by Animal Welfare Approved. (<https://animalwelfareapproved.us/standards/pig-2017/>)

PASTURE-RAISED

Our pork producers raise their animals exclusively outdoors on pasture in accordance with AWA standards. At no time do they live in confinement or in confinement-like conditions. Instead they live in their natural habitat of fields and woodlots, where they root in the soil, create wallows to cool-off and build nests to birth their young. All hogs are provided with shelter for farrowing (giving birth) and for managing temperature extremes and inclement weather.

NO ANTIBIOTICS

Our producers do not use growth-promoting antibiotics. This prophylactic use of antibiotics is unnecessary when hogs are raised outdoors in a low-stress environment and get plenty of exercise. If a hog does get sick, it is segregated and treated with an antibiotic to prevent suffering and ultimately sold into a different market channel.

NO HORMONAL IMPLANTS

Our producers do not use hormonal implants. In addition to being unnecessary, they are also prohibited by federal law for use in pork production.

NO ANIMAL BY-PRODUCTS

Our producers raise their own grains for feed and do not add animal by-products.

CERTIFIED NON-GMO

Hogs are omnivores and thus can eat a wide variety of foods, including grubs, roots, grasses and acorns. But the bulk of their diet is a grain ration made from corn and soy that contains varying amounts protein, depending on the growth stage and requirements of the animal. Our producers only feed certified non-GMO feed and most of them raise these grains themselves. These grains are certified non-GMO by A Greener World (<https://agreenerworld.org/solutions-and-certificates/>)

BREED SELECTION

All of our producers raise old-English style heritage breed hogs that are adapted to thriving outdoors, including Berkshire, Duroc, and Hampshire. Our farmers typically raise a hybrid mix

of breeds, including boars (male hogs) that have the best meat quality and sows and gilts (females) that have the best mothering characteristics. These heritage breeds have a sufficient fat layer to provide insulation during winter months and hair color to help prevent sunburn during summer months. Their pork is known for its rich red color, intramuscular marbling and porky flavor.

TRACEABILITY

All of our market hogs are raised on the farm where they were born. Each cut of meat and batch of sausage can be traced back to the farm (or farms) where it was sourced. This level of traceability is rarely seen in the meat industry.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

We frequently visit with our farmers and provide carcass quality feedback. In particular, we evaluate each batch of hogs for carcass characteristics such as back fat thickness, loin eye size, color and marbling. This information is shared with each producer so that can make informed decisions about breed selection, pasture management and nutrition programs to optimize meat quality.