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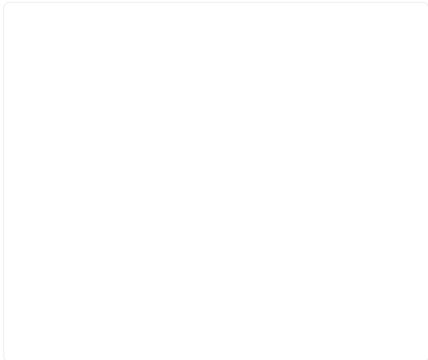
Vegan and Cruelty-Free Certifications



By [Gemma Alexander](#)

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[animal welfare](#), [cruelty-free](#), [vegan](#)



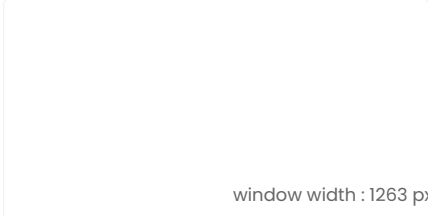
What Do You Think?



Are you considering moving because of climate change?

- I'm researching my options to decide
- No
- Yes

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If you are vegan, or simply concerned about animal welfare, it's surprisingly difficult to [shop your values](#). There are a lot of certification systems to choose from, but unlike [food safety](#) or [organic](#) products, there are no government certification systems or regulations for labeling vegan products or products that have not been tested on animals. There are not even legal definitions for [marketing terms](#) like vegan, vegan-friendly, vegetarian, and no animal ingredients. That means such terms are meaningless at best and [greenwashing](#) at worst. So if you value animal welfare, you need to know your third-party certification labels.

Vegan vs. Cruelty-free

The first thing you need to know is that vegan and cruelty-free are [not the same thing](#) . Vegan means that a product does not contain any animal-derived ingredients. Cruelty-free means that the product was not tested on animals during development. While this technically means that a vegan product could have been tested on animals and vice versa, in practice, most vegan certifications also require products to be cruelty-free, and many products labeled as cruelty-free are also vegan.

You may also see products labeled “humane.” Products and foods with humane labels *do* include animal parts or animal-derived ingredients. Humane labels mean that animals were [humanely raised](#) before slaughter or other use. The standards of care vary widely among these certifications.

The Vegan Society

[The Vegan Society](#) was founded in 1944 in Europe to promote dairy-free vegetarianism, coining the term “vegan” soon thereafter. They established the [Vegan Trademark](#) in 1990 to certify that a product is free from animal ingredients. Today, nearly 60,000 individual products, including cosmetics, clothing, food, and household items are certified. Products with the Vegan Trademark sunflower growing from a letter V do not include any ingredients derived from the animal kingdom; did not involve animal testing; and do not include any GMOs.



Vegan Action

The American nonprofit [Vegan Action](#) (sometimes called Vegan Awareness Foundation) was established to eliminate animal suffering, reduce environmental impacts, and improve human health through a vegan diet. For more than 25 years they have certified products through the [Vegan Certification Campaign](#) with a letter V inside a heart logo. More than 1,000 companies have certified products that do not contain animal products or byproducts and that have not been tested on animals through this system.



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Vegetarian Society

The U.K.-based [Vegetarian Society](#) is an information hub for vegetarianism. In addition to their “cookery school” with online classes, the Society offers [two trademarks](#): *Vegetarian Society Approved* and *Vegetarian Society Approved Vegan*. Vegetarian Society Approved trademark accreditation involves independent ingredient and production method checking. The trademarks can apply to foods, beverages, cosmetics, household and cleaning products, health products, pet foods, and more. Unlike many other certifications, Vegetarian Society does certify entire restaurants and pubs.



Leaping Bunny

[Leaping Bunny](#) is one of the biggest and most reliable cruelty-free certification systems and is endorsed by PETA. The system is administered by [multiple organizations](#): Leaping Bunny via CCIC (a coalition of eight national animal protection groups including the Humane Society) administers the logo in the U.S. and Canada. In the EU, Australia, and elsewhere in the world, two organizations, [Cruelty Free International](#) and [Choose Cruelty Free](#) have merged. As a result, there are multiple slightly different yet authentic logos. Unfortunately, shoppers will see a variety of rabbit-related logos that have no association with Leaping Bunny or any certification system. Consequently, Leaping Bunny requires some caution on the part of the consumer.





Leaping Bunny certified logos: Left: CCIC, Center: Cruelty Free Int'l, Right: Choose Cruelty Free (merged with Cruelty Free Int'l)

The [Leaping Bunny standard](#) is transparently published in full on the website and applies to entire companies rather than individual products. It disallows conducting or commissioning animal testing for all ingredients in cosmetic and household products.

Not all Leaping Bunny certified products will display the logo. To confirm that a product making the cruelty-free claim without the logo is actually certified, check the [complete list](#) of certifications on the Leaping Bunny website.

American Vegetarian Association

Since 1999, the [American Vegetarian Association](#) exists primarily as a certification system to confirm that food products, skin care, vitamins, and supplements are either vegetarian (may have eggs or dairy), or vegan (no animal by-products) and has not been tested on animals. Their triangular logo certifies individual products rather than companies. In contrast with certification, the AVA RECOMMENDED endorsement is a marketing tool utilized for restaurants and merchandise and is not meaningful.



People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals

[People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals](#) is well known for its animal rights activism. Their Bunny Free app lets you search for companies by name and tells you whether they test on animals. You can [request](#) a Bunny Free cruelty-free shopping guide from their website. They also maintain multiple [searchable databases](#) of companies that do and don't test on animals, as well as companies working for regulatory change and other animal welfare topics.

[Beauty Without Bunnies](#) cruelty-free certification is available for personal care, pet care, vitamins, and household products. Companies can be certified under one of two designations: *Global Animal Test-Free* and *Global Animal Test-Free and*

Vegan.

The Beauty Without Bunnies cruelty-free logo of a pink-eared rabbit indicates that a company has registered as cruelty-free with PETA, but does not require as much documentation as Leaping Bunny. (An older version of the logo features heart-shaped ears.)



The [PETA-Approved Vegan](#) logo is specifically for clothing and accessories. It can apply to either the individual product or the company's entire product line. Items with this logo do not include any materials from living or killed animals, as self-reported by the company.



advertising

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[Hair Conditioner That's Gentle on the Environment](#)



By [Gemma Alexander](#)

Gemma Alexander has an M.S. in urban horticulture and a backyard filled with native plants. After working in a genetics laboratory and at a landfill, she now writes about the environment, the arts and family. See more of her writing [here](#).

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