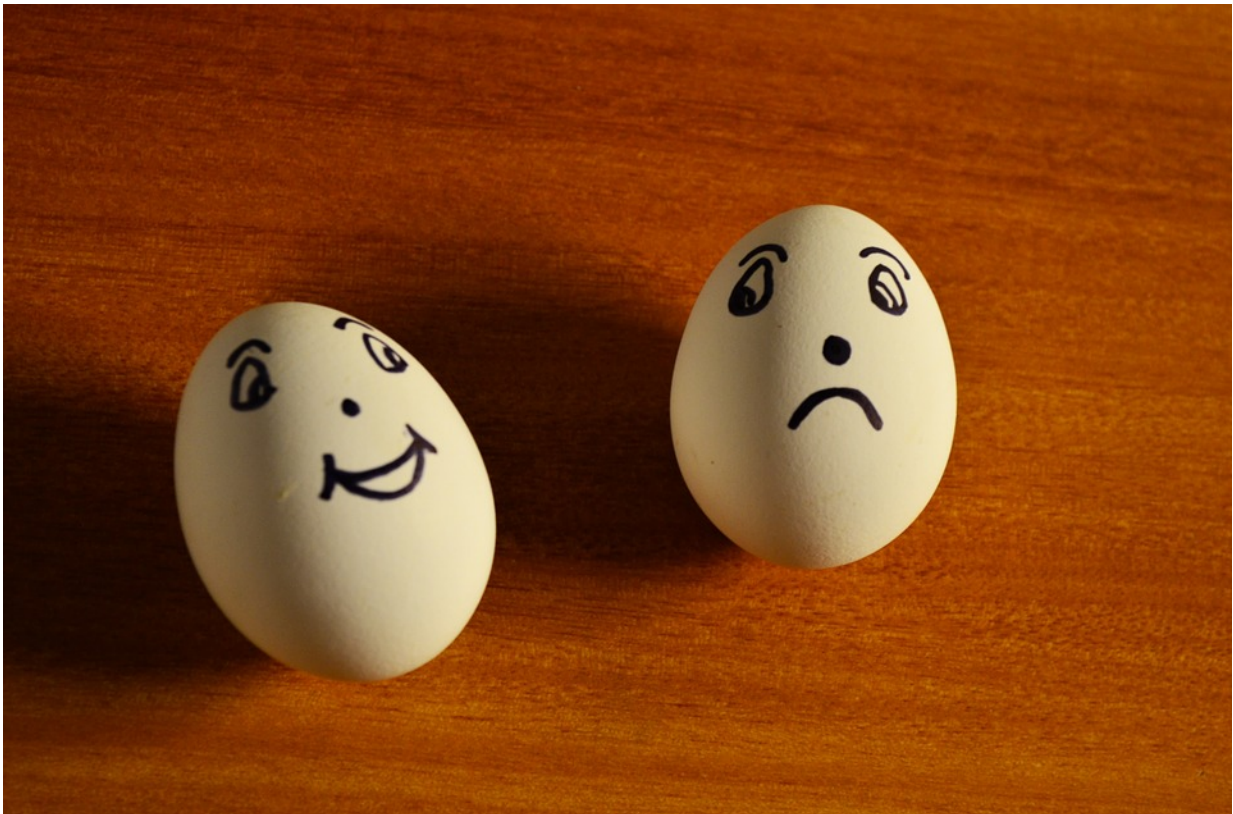


Free range-eggs seen as tastier, more nutritious and safer, study finds

May 16 2017



Happy egg. Credit: Taylor & Francis

People choose to buy free-range or cage-free eggs because they believe they taste better and are better quality than eggs from caged hens, new research published today suggests.

In a study, conducted by researchers at the University of Adelaide and published in *Anthrozoös*, the journal of the International Society for Anthrozoology, the most often reported motivations for buying free-range [eggs](#) included reasons such as the eggs were of better quality, more nutritious, and safer to eat, and that they allowed purchasers to avoid "industrialized" food.

Despite participants describing caged-egg production as "cruel", they did not tend to emphasize welfare reasons as critical for their purchases of free-range eggs. Instead, participants felt that the free-range chickens were "happier" and thus produced a better quality of product. This finding suggests that consumers are more likely to purchase a food product if it is both "ethical" and viewed as being of better quality, rather than for ethical reasons alone.

The study also revealed that there were high levels of awareness among participants of caged-egg production when compared to other types of animal farming. In addition, participants who bought free-range or cage-free eggs did not necessarily tend to buy meat with ethical claims, in part because the price difference is much smaller in eggs in comparison to different types of meat products. Some people produced their own free-range eggs by keeping a few hens.

To collect the data for the study, the researchers conducted focus groups and shopping mall interviews with 73 participants (of mixed age and gender) and asked about their food purchasing habits. Then they categorized the different reasons that people gave for their decisions to understand why people choose the [food](#) they do, especially when there are ethical issues and competing values involved.

Lead author Dr. Heather J. Bray from the School of Humanities and the Food Values Research Group at the University of Adelaide commented, "Taste and quality are strong motivations for purchasing and may be part

of the reason why people are prepared to pay a higher price. More importantly these findings suggest that consumers think about animal welfare in a much broader way than we previously thought, and in particular they believe that better welfare is connected to a better quality product."

The authors recommend that more research is needed including studies to further understand consumer motivations behind purchasing products with ethical production claims, in order to explore whether changes in production methods or labelling would be supported by consumers.

More information: Heather J. Bray et al, Happy Chickens Lay Tastier Eggs: Motivations for Buying Free-range Eggs in Australia, *Anthrozoös* (2017). [DOI: 10.1080/08927936.2017.1310986](https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2017.1310986)

Provided by Taylor & Francis

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