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Animal Outlook Sues Kroger for False Advertising Over Misleading "Well Raised" and "No Antibiotics" Claims at Ralphs Stores in California

Lawsuit alleges America's largest supermarket chain is deceiving consumers with humane-washing signage while stocking factory-farmed meat from companies with documented animal welfare violations

Los Angeles, CA — April 9, 2026 — Animal Outlook, a leading national animal protection organization, filed a lawsuit against The Kroger Company and its wholly owned subsidiary Ralphs Grocery Company in Los Angeles County Superior Court, alleging violations of California's Unfair Competition Law and False Advertising Law. The complaint charges that Ralphs stores throughout Southern California are using misleading signage to deceive consumers about the welfare and health attributes of meat products sold in their stores.



The lawsuit centers on large, prominently displayed signs at multiple Ralphs locations in Los Angeles County that make bold claims—"well raised" painted above meat counters and "no antibiotics" displayed over refrigerators and freezers. But according to the complaint, the

products beneath these feel-good signs tell a different story: conventional factory-farmed meat from some of the industry's most notorious producers, including Smithfield, Hormel, and Tyson.

"This is textbook humane-washing," says Ben Williamson, Executive Director of Animal Outlook. "Kroger is exploiting consumer concern about animal welfare and food safety by plastering reassuring language across their meat departments while doing absolutely nothing to ensure the products actually meet those claims. Shoppers see 'well raised' and 'no antibiotics' and reasonably believe they're purchasing products that reflect those values. Instead, they're getting the same factory-farmed meat available anywhere else—only now they've been tricked into feeling good about it."

The Deception in Detail

Animal Outlook documented systematic misrepresentation at Ralphs stores across Southern California. At one location, investigators found a refrigerated case marked "No Antibiotics" stocked with pork products from Farmer John, Hormel, Jimmy Dean, Johnsonville, and Oscar Mayer. According to the complaint, third-party food safety reports confirm that none of these products are likely to be antibiotic-free. At another location, a freezer bearing the same "No Antibiotics" claim was filled with Tyson chicken products and Butterball turkey. Again, expert reports confirm these products likely contain antibiotics, consistent with the companies' own public policies.

The "well raised" claims are equally misleading. Meat counters throughout Ralphs stores display this prominent signage above selections that include fresh chicken, beef, and pork from Kroger's regular private labels—products that don't meet even Kroger's own minimal animal welfare standards. According to the complaint, Kroger's policy sets specific standards for broiler chickens—including requirements for at least one square foot of space per bird, access to litter, proper lighting, and humane slaughter methods—but these standards apply only to the company's premium Simple Truth brand. The regular private label chicken products sold under "well raised" signs at Ralphs can be sourced from animals raised without adequate space, litter, or proper lighting, and subjected to inhumane slaughter practices. For beef, Kroger provides no welfare standards whatsoever. In other words, the products under Ralphs' "well raised" signs are not well raised even by Kroger's own standards.

Legal Claims and Relief Sought

The lawsuit alleges that Kroger and Ralphs are violating California Business and Professions Code sections 17200 (Unfair Competition Law) and 17500 (False Advertising Law) by making statements they know or should know are untrue and misleading.

"California law is clear that corporations cannot make false or misleading statements about their products," said Bryan W. Pease, attorney for Animal Outlook. "Kroger knows what products it stocks and what attributes those products do and do not have. When you put up a sign that says 'no antibiotics' or 'well raised,' consumers reasonably expect the products beneath those signs to match those claims. Kroger's failure to ensure that is a violation of California law, and we're asking the court to put a stop to it."

Animal Outlook is seeking injunctive relief requiring Kroger and Ralphs to either stock only products that actually meet the claims made by the signage, or remove the misleading signs entirely. The organization is also asking the court to order corrective advertising to inform consumers that products in these sections are not necessarily antibiotic-free or well-raised, and to award attorneys' fees and costs.

The complaint notes that California has some of the strongest animal welfare standards in the nation, with voters consistently supporting ballot measures to protect animals from the worst factory farming abuses. Kroger's practices at Ralphs exploit consumer concern by creating a false impression of humane treatment while selling conventional factory-farmed products.

For more information, please visit: AnimalOutlook.org/legal-advocacy/#ralphs

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Animal Outlook is a nonprofit animal protection organization working to end the abuse of farmed animals through undercover investigations, litigation, corporate outreach, public education, and other advocacy programs. <http://animaloutlook.org>

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