

Case Report

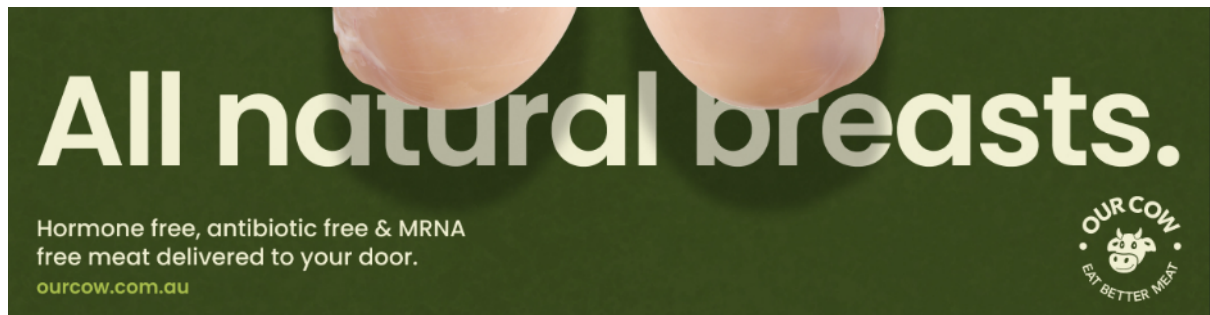
Case number: 0215-26
Advertiser: Our Cow Pty Ltd
Medium: Billboard
Decision date: 26-Aug-2026
Decision: No breach

ISSUES CONSIDERED BY THE COMMUNITY PANEL

- AANA Food and Beverages Code - 2.1 Not misleading or deceptive - no breach

AD DESCRIPTION

This billboard ad reads 'All natural breasts.' and depicts two partial chicken breasts draped across the top edge. The wording at the bottom reads, 'Hormone free, antibiotic free & MRNA free meat delivered to your door. ourcow.com.au'. The bottom right-hand corner has the company logo and catchphrase 'EAT BETTER MEAT'.



SUMMARY

Complaint

A complaint was received on the grounds that all animals produce hormones, and all contains messenger RNA. It is, therefore, misleading to suggest that the advertiser's products do not contain hormones or MRNA.

The complainant added that the ad also has a secondary, more nefarious message, which suggests that its products are different, because of an implied suggestion that mRNA vaccines and hormones are generally utilised in the meat and poultry industry. This is not the case and has not been the case for at least 50 years.

Advertiser response

The advertiser responded that consumers regularly encounter descriptions such as Free Range, Grass Fed, Organic, Hormone Free and Antibiotic Free when purchasing food. These are familiar terms used throughout the Australian food industry to describe farming practices, production methods and sourcing standards. As such, consumers would understand the message to clarify how its products are sourced and produced, rather than making technical scientific claims about the biological composition of meat.

A common question from customers is whether the meat is 'hormone free'. This is always asked in the context of whether additional hormones are being administered. Its meat suppliers do not administer hormonal growth promotants, and the statement accurately reflects that production standard.

Similarly, the reference to 'mRNA free', in conjunction with 'antibiotic free' refers to its sourcing and production methods. This is how people would understand it. It is unlikely to be interpreted to suggest that its meat and poultry contain no natural mRNA.

A copy of the advertiser's full response is included as Appendix A.

Decisions

The Panel found that the ad did not breach section 2.1 of the AANA Food and Beverages Code, as the ad was not likely to mislead or deceive people.

ASSESSMENT AND DECISION

Section 2.1 (AANA Food & Beverages Code): Advertising for Food or Beverage Products must not be misleading or deceptive or likely to mislead or deceive.

The Practice Note states:

In determining whether advertising for food or beverage products is misleading or deceptive or likely to mislead or deceive, the Community Panel will consider the likely audience for the advertising, including whether the advertisement is directed at the public at large or a more targeted audience. The Community Panel will consider whether or not an Average Consumer within the target audience would have been misled or deceived or likely to be misled or deceived by the advertisement.

Panel assessment

The Panel considered that people would likely anticipate or at least understand that animals naturally produce hormones. Similarly, people who are concerned enough to question whether meat contains mRNA (messenger ribonucleic acid) would likely be aware that all living cells contain mRNA naturally.

The Panel considered that the predominant health concern for people in recent years has generally been whether additional hormones were injected in the animal prior to processing (which is said to increase growth and muscle mass), or whether mRNA vaccines are used (which is said to prevent diseases). Concerns in this regard generally relate to whether such

additional hormones or vaccines could somehow be passed on to humans who consume the meat.

The Panel noted that the ad also makes clear reference to ‘antibiotics’ in the phrase Hormone free, antibiotics free & mRNA free meat delivered to your door’. The Panel considered that consumers who are mindful of these practices, would likely realise that animals do not produce their antibiotics in the conventional sense.

From this perspective, the Panel was satisfied that the average viewer would instinctively realise that the intended communication is that the advertiser’s products do not contain added hormones, antibiotics or mRNA products. While the Panel acknowledges that the word ‘added’ may have prevented this complaint, it does not consider this omission to be significant enough to create a message that is likely to mislead people.

The Panel also does not consider the ad to be a reference to other meat and poultry producers, as suggested by the complainant. The Panel considers that there is no reference to other producers, and no comparison is made in the ad.

Panel decision

Accordingly, the Panel found that the ad did not breach section 2.1 of the AANA Food and Beverages Code.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

The Panel found that the ad did not breach any other section of the relevant advertising codes.

APPENDIX A: ADVERTISER RESPONSE IN FULL

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Complaint 0215-26.

Our Cow appreciates the role of Ad Standards in promoting responsible advertising and takes its obligations under the AANA Food & Beverages Code seriously. We are committed to ensuring our advertising is accurate, transparent and helps consumers make informed purchasing decisions.

We appreciate the opportunity to explain the intent of this advertisement, the sourcing standards it refers to, and why we believe it complies with Section 2.1 of the AANA Food & Beverages Code.

1. About Our Cow

Our Cow is an Australian owned and operated business that delivers premium quality meat sourced directly from Australia farmers to Australian households.

Since its establishment, Our Cow has focused on helping consumers better understand where their food comes from, how it is produced and the standards applied throughout the supply chain.

Providing this information is an important part of our business. Through our website, customer communications, social media channels and customer support team, we regularly explain topics such as free range farming, grass-fed production, animal welfare and the sourcing standards that apply to our products.

2. What the Advertisement Communicates

The concerns raised relate primarily to the phrases “Hormone Free” and “MRNA Free”. We’d like to explain what those statements were intended to communicate and why we believe consumers understand them in that context.

Consumers regularly encounter descriptions such as Free Range, Grass Fed, Organic, Hormone Free and Antibiotic Free when purchasing food. These are familiar terms used throughout the Australian food industry to describe farming practices, production methods and sourcing standards.

The statements used in our advertisement sit within that same context. Viewed as a whole, we believe consumers would understand the advertisement as communicating how Our Cow’s products are sourced and produced, rather than making technical scientific claims about the biological composition of meat.

This understanding is also reflected in the questions we receive from customers. Our customer support team regularly receives enquiries asking whether our products are hormone free, antibiotic free and mRNA free. These questions are about farming practices and sourcing standards, not about naturally occurring biological processes.

This is why we chose this language in the advertisement. It reflects the terminology consumers already use when seeking information about how their food has been produced.

For this reason, we believe the overall impression created by the advertisement is clear. It communicates genuine sourcing standards that apply to Our Cow's products and helps consumers understand the production practices behind the food they are purchasing.

3. The "Hormone Free" Statement

One of the concerns raised is that the phrase "Hormone Free" may be misleading because animals naturally produce hormones.

Our Cow uses the phrase "Hormone Free" in the way consumers commonly encounter and understand it when purchasing meat products. In this context, it refers to production practices, specifically that animals have not been administered hormonal growth promotants during production.

This is one of the sourcing standards that applies to products supplied through Our Cow. Our suppliers do not administer hormonal growth promotants to the animals supplying products sold by Our Cow, and the statement accurately reflects that production standard.

This is also consistent with the questions we receive from customers. When people ask whether our meat is "Hormone Free", they are seeking information about farming practices and livestock management, not asking whether animals naturally produce hormones.

We therefore believe consumers would understand the statement in the advertisement in the same way, as information about how the product has been produced, rather than as a scientific claim about the biological composition of meat.

4. The "mRNA Free" Statement

The complaint also raises concerns about the phrase "mRNA Free", noting that messenger RNA occurs naturally within living animal cells.

Our Cow uses the phrase "mRNA Free" to describe one of the sourcing standards that applies to products supplied through our business. In the context of the advertisement, we believe consumers would understand this statement to mean that Our Cow sources meat from suppliers who do not use mRNA vaccine technology in the production of the products we sell.

Like the other statements in the advertisement, "mRNA Free" appears alongside "Hormone Free" and "Antibiotic Free" as part of a broader description of the production standards applying to Our Cow's products. We believe consumers would read these statements together as information about farming and sourcing practices, rather than as technical scientific claims.

This understanding is also reflected in the enquiries we receive from customers. People regularly ask whether our products are "mRNA Free" when seeking information about livestock management practices and supplier standards before making a purchase.

The advertisement does not state that meat contains no naturally occurring messenger RNA. Rather, it communicates a sourcing standard that genuinely applies to products supplied through Our Cow.

For these reasons, we do not believe the statement is misleading, and that it accurately communicates one of the production standards that consumers increasingly ask us about when choosing where to buy their meat.

5. No Comparative Representation

The complaint suggests the advertisement implies that competing meat products contain hormones or involve the use of mRNA vaccine technology.

This was not the intention of the advertisement.

The billboard makes no reference to any competitor, supermarket, retailer or other supplier. It does not compare Our Cow's products with those of another business or comment on the production practices of others.

Instead, it simply communicates the sourcing standards that apply to products supplied by Our Cow.

For this reason, we do not believe the advertisement makes the comparative representations suggested in the complaint.

6. Compliance with Section 2.1

Thank you for considering our response.

Our Cow is committed to providing consumers with clear, accurate and transparent information about the products we sell and the standards that apply to them.

As outlined in this response, the phrases "Hormone Free", "Antibiotic Free" and "mRNA Free" were used to communicate genuine sourcing standards that apply to Our Cow's products. In the context of the advertisement, these statements communicate production practices and sourcing standards, rather than technical scientific claims.

For these reasons, Our Cow considers the advertisement to comply with Section 2.1 of the AANA Food & Beverages Code.