



## Montana Audubon Conservation Ranching

### What is Audubon Conservation Ranching?

Audubon's "green seal" is the premiere certification for products that have positive impacts on grassland bird habitat and grassland ecosystems. The Audubon Conservation Ranching program empowers consumers to support conservation by selecting beef products bearing the Audubon seal, knowing that these products come from lands where grazing and management practices ensure diverse bird habitat, healthy soils, abundant pollinators, and cleaner waters.

### Why would my ranch benefit from the Audubon certification?

More and more consumers are concerned about where their food comes from, and they're looking for ways to support farmers and ranchers that nurture their animals and sustain the environment. A known conservation brand will help highlight in the marketplace the conservation attributes of the product you produce. The program can expand market exposure and provide more product differentiation, including opportunities to sell to brands with well-established retail networks.

### Ranch certification is achieved by following a set of program standards in four areas:

1. **HABITAT MANAGEMENT**~ Ranchers adopt a Habitat Management Plan (HMP) that addresses site-specific habitat goals and management actions to benefit target grassland bird species.
2. **FORAGE AND FEEDING**~ Livestock must be able to freely graze open grasslands. The standards prohibit antibiotics and animal byproducts in feed, and seek to minimize or eliminate grain-based feed supplementation. No feedlots are allowed.
3. **ANIMAL HEALTH AND WELFARE**~ Certified ranches demonstrate a commitment to properly caring for livestock by adhering to livestock production methods that reflect best practices for animal health and welfare. Growth hormones are prohibited.
4. **ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**~ By restricting pesticides, minimizing fertilizers and protecting streambanks, ranching practices result in cleaner streams, healthier soils, increased plant diversity and more pollinators. By implementing regenerative grazing approaches, these ranches are putting carbon back into the soil while becoming more climate-resilient.

Program standards were developed by producers, cattle industry experts and wildlife biologists to strike a meaningful balance among conservation, animal husbandry, consumer demands, and economic realities. The full set of ACR program standards is available at [Audubon.org/ranching](https://Audubon.org/ranching). Audubon has enlisted Food Alliance as a third-party verifier. Their ongoing certification assures consumers that products from Audubon-certified ranches meet program standards.



## Ranch / Farm Onboarding Process

6 months minimum

1. Rancher/producer shows interest in the program.
2. An assessment is completed to determine eligibility and suitability for program participation. Audubon develops supply chain connections as needed.
3. An HMP is developed for the ranch or farm. Completing this process can take 1-3 months.
4. The HMP is finalized and signed by the rancher. The rancher signs a program agreement with Audubon. Management actions are initiated to meet HMP goals and program standards.
5. A certification audit is scheduled and conducted on the ranch prior to livestock being sold.
6. Ranch or farm product is approved for the Audubon “seal” if the audit results are acceptable.



The process for onboarding a ranch into the program should begin a minimum of six months prior to the expected date in which that ranch's livestock will be sold. An HMP and an Audubon agreement must be completed and signed before a certification audit can occur, which will finalize the approval of that ranch's product compliance with Audubon protocols.

### For more information contact:

Amy Seaman  
Director of Policy & Science  
Montana Audubon  
Office (406) 443-3949  
Cell: (406) 210-9449  
Email: [aseaman@mtaudubon.org](mailto:aseaman@mtaudubon.org)

Or

Tori Chulyak  
Range & Wildlife Biologist  
Montana Audubon/Pheasants Forever/Natural Resource Conservation Service  
Office: (406) 371-2549  
Cell: (406) 633-1289  
Email: [Tchulyak@pheasantsforever.org](mailto:Tchulyak@pheasantsforever.org)