



This poll surveyed 1,373 likely voters via online panel from May 18, 2026 to May 20, 2026. Results were weighted by gender, age, race, and education to match population demographics. The margin of error is ± 3.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Egg Carton Packaging & Consumer Perceptions of Hen Treatment

Summary of open-ended survey responses. Results of other questions further in document.

Overview

This report summarizes responses to three open-ended survey questions about egg carton packaging and consumer assumptions regarding the treatment of egg-laying hens. The data reveals a clear pattern: packaging shapes consumer assumptions about animal welfare even when no welfare claims are made, and people react strongly when those assumptions are violated.

Question 1 asked what people assume about hen treatment from a basic Kroger egg carton (plain brown cardboard, Grade AA, extra large). Question 2 asked the same about an Egghand's Best carton (listing vitamins, "vegetarian fed," "farm fresh"). Question 3 asked how people would feel about a store that promised to stop selling eggs from caged hens but never followed through.

Packaging Drives Assumptions of Good Treatment

Question 1:



Above is a picture of an egg carton sold at Kroger. Based on the carton, what would you assume about the treatment of the hens that lay the eggs?

The largest single theme was "Assumed Good / Humane Treatment" at 29.2% of all responses, despite the plain Kroger carton containing zero claims about animal welfare. Among respondents who expressed any opinion about hen welfare (as opposed to focusing on the product or giving no opinion), 67.6% assumed good treatment versus 32.4% who assumed poor conditions. People inferred humane treatment from the brown color of the cardboard, the Grade AA label, the Kroger brand name, the word "protein," and even the size of the eggs.



Theme	Count	% of Total
Assumed Good / Humane Treatment	392	29.2%
Assumed Caged / Factory Farmed	118	8.8%
No Label = Poor Treatment	70	5.2%
Focus on Egg Quality / Product	147	10.9%
Carton Tells Me Nothing	99	7.4%
Hormones / Steroids / Additives	30	2.2%
No Opinion / Non-response / Blank	375	27.9%
Other	112	8.3%

Selected Quotes: Plain Kroger Carton

[Mexico, MO] *"I would say that they're probably treated very well since they're grade double-A and they're from Kroger and I think Kroger is a really trusted high-class brand, personally."*

[Channelview, TX] *"Well, since the carton is cardboard and not styrofoam and because of the environmental issue, I would assume that the hens would be well taken care of."*

[Powhatan, VA] *"The carton is a brown color and it says grade AA. It makes me feel like they are organic in a sense and the hens are taken very good care of and cared for."*

[Carrollton, TX] *"Based on the carton, we can see that the hand treatment is nice because looking at the carton, a grade AA shows that these hens were treated properly and these hens lay healthy eggs."*

[Brooksville, MS] *"Yes, I would assume that the hens are well taken care of by the quality of the carton."*

[Henderson, NC] *"I would assume they're good eggs because the package is well done, the cardboard is well done, and I can't see no eggs hanging out of the cardboard."*

[Allenhurst, GA] *"I don't think that I can assume anything based off the carton, but because they are a good source of protein I will guess that the chickens are well fed. And they're extra large, so if they're not using some steroids, then the chickens have to be healthy."*

[Douglasville, GA] *"Well, judging by the description on the package, it's grade AA extra large eggs, so I'm assuming that the hens that laid the eggs are probably well taken care of for the eggs to get a double A grade."*

[Mount Gilead, OH] *"I would assume that the partner involved with the eggs for Kroger are treating the hens fairly. I don't know if they're caged or roam free, but I'm assuming it's free."*

[Albany, GA] *"Based on the way the carton is designed, I would say that hens are treated very well. Although sometimes you cannot go by the way the carton looks, but I like Kroger and I think that they treat the animals that they use for their products, I think they treat them very well."*

[Baltimore, OH] *"I assume that the treatment of the hens that lay the eggs, they get their bellies all rubbed after the eggs get hatched. They give them the best grain in the world, especially being for Kroger. They probably get like a nice little hot tub they put themselves in, a bubble bath, and their feathers all nice brushed and everything every day."*



Question 2:



Above is another picture of an egg carton sold at Kroger. The carton indicates the eggs are “farm fresh” and “vegetarian fed.” Based on the carton, what would you assume about the treatment of the hens that lay the eggs?

With the Egglan’s Best carton, assumptions of good treatment intensified. “Well Treated / Good Care” was again the top theme at 25.1%. Critically, among those who expressed any welfare opinion, 80.6% assumed good treatment versus just 19.4% who assumed poor conditions (up from 67.6% for the plain Kroger carton). The vitamin claims, “vegetarian fed” label, and brand name led people to construct elaborate narratives of happy, free-roaming hens. Many respondents explicitly stated these hens must be treated better than the Kroger hens.

Theme	Count	% of Total
Well Treated / Good Care	329	25.1%
Vitamins and Nutritional Focus	147	11.2%
Vegetarian Fed / Diet Focus	143	10.9%
Positive Product Evaluation	133	10.1%
Caged / Factory Farm Conditions	79	6.0%
Skeptical / Artificial Additives	51	3.9%
Carton Tells Nothing	51	3.9%
No Opinion / Non-response / Blank	353	26.9%
Other	27	2.1%

Selected Quotes: Egglan’s Best Carton

[Chicago Ridge, IL] “These hens were treated like royalty. Egglan’s Best is the best eggs you can buy out there, that’s why they’re so expensive.”

[Memphis, TN] “The carton makes you think they would be treated better than just the regular hens.”

[Orland Park, IL] “The hens are treated great with these eggs, cause it’s called Egglan’s Best. I mean, if it’s Egglan’s Best, why wouldn’t they be treated great?”



[Chicago, IL] *"I always liked Egglund's Best because they have a lot of vitamins and I know they treat the hens very well, and they must because they produce such great eggs."*

[Dallas, TX] *"I think these hens are being treated really, really good because they're vegetarian-fed hens. They're excellent source of vitamins in these eggs. These hens must be treated really well because they're putting out farm-fresh Egglund's Best eggs."*

[Green Bay, WI] *"I have read that Egglund's treats their chickens humanely better. I see they feed them with vegetarian-fed hens, so that kind of shows me right there that they're taking care of their animals much better. And they're more expensive, so I'm going to put my trust in them that they are treating their animals humanely."*

[Evergreen Park, IL] *"I do sometimes purchase Egglund's Best eggs. They seem to be healthier. The hens are vegetarian fed, so I've assumed based on reading that the hens are cage-free and allowed to roam freely in open spaces. So I do believe that the hens are treated fairly and ethically."*

[Gordo, AL] *"EB is a great brand of eggs. So I'm thinking to myself personally that these hens are very healthy. They're treated nicely and they're producing a great product for society."*

[Dayton, OH] *"I would say these are probably treated better just by the packaging alone, but again, I don't know for sure."*

[Perdido, AL] *"Judging by the above carton, I would assume that the hens that lay these eggs probably fare better than many hens. I believe they possibly are free-range, they're fed a vegetarian diet, so the producers are conscious of animal welfare."*



Disappointment When Expectations Are Violated

Question 3:

How would you feel about a store that said they would stop selling eggs from chickens that spent their entire lives confined in small cages and then never followed through with that promise?

Question 3 asked how respondents would feel about a store that promised to stop selling eggs from caged hens but never followed through. The results show strong negative reactions: 41.8% of all respondents (568 people) expressed some form of negative reaction, from outright boycott threats to mild disappointment. Among those who expressed a clear directional opinion (excluding no-opinion, blanks, and other), 83.0% reacted negatively, with only 8.5% expressing indifference. Even the “disappointed but resigned” group still clearly recognized the breach of trust.

Theme	Count	% of Total
Angry Betrayal, Would Boycott	190	14.0%
Dishonest / Untrustworthy Store	163	12.0%
Animal Welfare / Ethical Concern	110	8.1%
Disappointed but Mild / Resigned	105	7.7%
Would Support Cage-Free	138	10.1%
Indifferent / Eggs Are Eggs	116	8.5%
No Opinion / Non-response / Blank	365	26.8%
Other	173	12.7%

Angry Betrayal and Boycott (14.0%)

[Dunedin, FL] *“I would be absolutely disappointed, and I would feel bad for the chickens and the hens and even the babies. I would feel so horrible. I wouldn’t even buy the eggs, to be honest. It would feel like betrayal and not fair to the animals.”*

[Chicago Ridge, IL] *“If the store I went to said they were going to stop selling eggs from chickens that spent their entire lives confined in small cages and never followed through with that promise, I would stop buying groceries from that store. If you don’t mean what you say, then don’t say it.”*

[Topeka, KS] *“I wouldn’t trust that store for anything, and I would find a different store to go to. They said they were going to do it and did not, then that’s lying, and that’s lying on a big thing to a lot of people.”*

[New Market, VA] *“I would feel betrayed and I would no longer trust that store. I would look for other alternatives because I would support what I believe in and what’s right.”*

[Whiting, IN] *“I would 100% never shop from them again, and I would more than likely spread word to family and friends and maybe even on social media to expose the fact that they said they would stop selling them but never followed through.”*



[Pearland, TX] *"If a store said that they would stop selling eggs from chickens spending their entire lives confined in these small cages, and they didn't follow through, that is a total lie. I would stop shopping at that store. There's no sense in them lying about it."*

[Las Vegas, NV] *"I feel very strongly about chickens being able to roam free and if the store would start or stop selling the run free chickens, I wouldn't shop there anymore."*

[Kingston, TN] *"I will stop shopping in that store. That store would no longer have any credibility or trust or carry any weight. I don't believe in abusing animals, and being caged is animal abuse."*

Dishonesty and Lost Trust (12.0%)

[Akron, OH] *"If they make the promise that they're going to stop selling those eggs and then don't, I'm going to wonder what else they aren't being honest about and just probably avoid the store altogether."*

[Perdido, AL] *"That actually is one of my pet peeves. Do what you say you're going to do. That is so important. When someone makes promises that they don't follow through with, I lose a lot of respect for that individual because basically they're lying."*

[Mexico, MO] *"I would have absolutely no trust in that store, because clearly they think very poorly of their customers, that they would lie to them, and they'd probably think that we're stupid, and I don't like that."*

[Suffolk, VA] *"I would feel very misled, and I do feel misled if indeed that's the truth about the chickens living in those little tiny confined cages. It would greatly make me want to shop at a store that did not buy eggs that way."*

[Hamilton, OH] *"I would say that a store like this was being just as dishonest as the people who sell the eggs and not disclose that they're kept in small confined areas. And so I think they're both dishonest. I wouldn't have anything to do with either one of them."*

[Montgomery, IN] *"I would think twice about shopping there, because they don't have to say 'hey, we're not going to do this, we're not going to sell this' and sell it anyway, they just don't have to say anything, so I would be uncomfortable with that."*

Disappointed but Resigned (7.7%)

[Berea, KY] *"While I would be disappointed and somewhat irritated to learn that this had happened, I would not be surprised. I don't think there's a whole lot of truth in marketing."*

[Reidsville, NC] *"I would be disappointed but they already had my money. What can I do? Switch stores after the fact."*

[Keyser, WV] *"Anyone that promises something and then doesn't follow through, I mean, how are you supposed to feel? If you don't follow through with something you promised, then yeah, it's gonna make you upset. Would I stop buying the eggs if I've been buying them all this time? I don't know about that. If it's convenient and they're still good eggs, but it just ain't right if you make a promise."*

[Green Bay, WI] *"I feel that a store that is willing to not sell eggs where chickens were not treated the best is a great stand to take, and if for some reason they never followed through with that, that would be an issue and I wouldn't be as trusting of that store."*



Key Takeaways

Consumers are reading packaging as an implicit promise about animal welfare, even when no such promise is made. They infer humane treatment from grade labels, cardboard color, brand reputation, egg size, and nutritional claims. Among respondents who expressed a welfare opinion about the plain Kroger carton, 67.6% assumed good treatment. That figure rose to 80.6% for the Eggland's Best carton, which lists vitamins and "vegetarian fed" but makes no explicit animal welfare claims.

When consumers learn those inferences were wrong, the dominant reaction is not indifference. Of those who expressed a clear opinion about a store breaking a cage-free promise, 83.0% reacted negatively, with responses ranging from outright boycott (14.0% of all respondents) to expressions of lost trust (12.0%) and ethical concern (8.1%). Only 8.5% of all respondents said they would be indifferent.

The gap between what packaging implies and what it actually guarantees represents both a consumer protection concern and a significant reputational risk for retailers. Even respondents who were resigned to the broken promise still articulated a clear sense that it was wrong, suggesting that tolerance for this gap may be thinner than the "indifferent" percentage alone would suggest.

Grocery Store Survey

May 18-20, 2026

This poll surveyed 1,373 likely voters via online panel from May 18, 2026 to May 20, 2026. Results were weighted by gender, age, race, and education to match population demographics. The margin of error is ± 3.0 percentage points at the 95% confidence level.

Q1. Which of the following best describes your race or ethnicity?

White	65%
Black or African American	21%
Hispanic or Latino	8%
Asian	1%
American Indian or Alaska Native	2%
Other	2%

Q2. What is your age?

18-34	21%
35-49	28%
50-64	27%
65+	24%

Q3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

No high school diploma	3%
High school or GED	34%
Some college	31%
Bachelor's degree	21%
Graduate or professional degree	10%

Q4. What is your gender?

Male	43%
Female	57%
Other/prefer not to say	0%

Q5. What is your annual household income?

Under \$25,000	25%
\$25,000-\$49,999	29%
\$50,000-\$74,999	21%
\$75,000-\$99,999	10%
\$100,000-\$149,999	8%
\$150,000+	5%
Prefer not to say	2%

Q6. How likely are you to vote in the November 2026 general election?

Definitely will vote	54%
Probably will vote	16%
Fifty-fifty	14%
Probably will not vote	6%
Definitely will not vote	10%

Q7. Who did you vote for in the 2024 presidential election?

Republican Donald Trump	41%
Democrat Kamala Harris	37%
Libertarian Chase Oliver	1%
Green Jill Stein	1%
I did not vote	20%

Q8. Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as a Democrat, a Republican, an Independent, or something else?

Democrat	36%
Republican	36%
Independent	23%
Something else	5%

Q9. If you had to choose, would you say you typically lean more toward Democrats or more toward Republicans?

Conditional; If [Independent, Something else] to Q#8

Lean more toward Democrats	25%
Lean more toward Republicans	24%
Neither	50%

Q10. Using the following scale, how would you describe yourself politically?

Very conservative	18%
Somewhat conservative	16%
Moderate	41%
Somewhat liberal	12%
Very liberal	13%

Q11. If the 2026 Congressional elections were held today, would you vote for the Republican or Democratic candidate?

Definitely Republican	26%
Probably Republican	13%
Probably Democratic	13%
Definitely Democratic	30%
I would not vote	11%
Not sure	8%

Q12. Do you or your family shop at any of the following stores? Please select all which apply.

Harris Teeter	14%
Mariano's	5%
Smith's	5%
Dillons	4%
Metro Market	3%
Pick 'n Save	7%
Food 4 Less	10%
Baker's	3%
Kroger's	75%
Jay C Foods	2%
Fred Meyer	5%
City Market	4%
Gerbes	2%
King Soopers	1%
Pay-Less Super Markets	5%
Ruler Foods	3%
Cornerfield Market	0%
Freshfield Foods	0%
Valley Provisions	0%
Homeway Foods	0%
Goodgrow Grocers	0%
Silver Fork Foods	0%
County Basket	0%
MeadowMart	0%
Elm Street Grocers	0%
No, I do not shop at any of the above stores.	0%

Q13. How often do you or your family shop at any of the following stores: Kroger, Harris Teeter, Mariano's, Smith's, Dillons, Metro Market, Pick 'n Save, Food 4 Less and Baker's, Jay C Food Store / Jay C Foods, Fred Meyer, City Market, Gerbes, King Soopers, Pay-Less Super Markets, or Ruler Foods?

Weekly or more	37%
A few times a month	41%
Monthly or less	23%
Never	0%

Q14. Are you the primary shopper for you or your family?

Yes, I'm the primary shopper (select if you are only member of your household)	77%
I share shopping responsibilities equally	23%
No, someone else is the primary shopper	0%



Q15. Based on the pictures of the egg cartons sold at Kroger, what do you believe best describes the living conditions of the hens that laid the eggs? (please only select one answer)

Chickens living in small cages for their whole lives	25%
Chickens living cage-free inside a barn	24%
Chickens living cage-free in a barn with some outdoor access.	36%
Chickens living outside in a pasture	15%



Q16. Based on the label "farm fresh," for eggs sold at Kroger what do you believe best describes the living conditions of the hens that laid the eggs? (please only select one answer)

- Chickens living in small cages for their whole lives 19%
- Chickens living cage-free inside a barn 23%
- Chickens living cage-free in a barn with some outdoor access. 37%
- Chickens living outside in a pasture 20%



Q17. Based on the pictures of the egg cartons sold at Kroger, would you feel the branding is honest or dishonest if you learned that the chickens that produced both of these eggs spend their entire lives in cages with less individual space than a letter-sized sheet of paper and are never given the opportunity to spread their wings?

- Very honest ----- 27%
- Somewhat honest ----- 28%
- Somewhat dishonest ----- 17%
- Very dishonest ----- 20%
- Not sure ----- 9%

Q18. Would you be surprised to learn that "farm fresh" can be displayed on the egg cartons produced by chickens that spent their entire lives in cages with less individual space than a letter-sized sheet of paper and were never given the opportunity to spread their wings?

- Surprised ----- 49%
- Not surprised ----- 51%

Q19. Would you be more likely or less likely to shop at a store that refuses to sell eggs from chickens confined in small cages? This store would only sell cage-free eggs.

- Much more likely ----- 32%
- Somewhat more likely ----- 27%
- Somewhat less likely ----- 14%
- Much less likely ----- 9%
- Not sure ----- 18%

Q20. Would you be more likely or less likely to shop at a store that commits to stop selling eggs from chickens confined in small cages within the next five years? In five years, this store would only sell cage-free eggs.

Much more likely	33%
Somewhat more likely	30%
Somewhat less likely	13%
Much less likely	9%
Not sure	15%