

**V-Label**  
**International label for products and services**  
**Manual for licensees**



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## 1. The V-Label as a guide for an expanding target group

Consumers can not always recognise at first glance whether your products are vegan or vegetarian. Calf rennet in the cheese ripening process or gelatine in wine production are examples of 'hidden' animal ingredients. These are not immediately apparent to consumers when viewing the list of ingredients. This is particularly relevant as more and more people are purchasing vegetarian and vegan products.

### The V-Label creates transparency and clarity

The V-Label is an internationally recognised and, since 1996, a protected trademark for the labelling of vegetarian and vegan products. Nearly all major food companies in Europe and many outside Europe use the V-Label. As the owner of the trademark rights, V-Label GmbH coordinates the international cooperation of the V-Label. The V-Label offers consumers a convenient and easy choice of the products on the shelf. Companies aid transparency and clarity by using the V-Label, thus reaching new target groups.

## 2. Criteria for the V-Label

### 2.1 Definition of 'vegan'

(1) Products are considered vegan if they are not of animal origin and, at no stage of production and processing, has use been made of or has the product been supplemented with:

- ingredients or components that are of animal origin (including additives, carriers, aromas, fragrances, flavourings, and enzymes) or
- processing aids that are of animal origin or
- substances which are not additives but which are used in the same way and with the same purpose as processing aids in either processed or unprocessed form and which are of animal origin.

This includes, especially but not exclusively,:

- No meat or any other slaughter products (e.g. offal).
- No fish or any other marine animals.
- No eggs.
- No honey.
- No milk.
- No wax from animals, including wool fat (lanoline), beeswax, and shellac.
- No fur, no leather, no silk.
- No royal jelly.
- No colouring agents of animal origin.
- No substances which were bleached with animal charcoal.
- No substances which were clarified with animal substances such as gelatine or fish bladder.
- No substances manufactured, obtained or produced from the above-mentioned substances.

## 2.2 Definition of 'vegetarian'

(2) Products are considered vegetarian if they meet the requirements of the paragraph above, with the difference being that in their production, milk, colostrum, eggs, honey, beeswax, propolis, and wool grease, including lanolin derived from the wool of live sheep, and their components or derivatives may be added or used.

This includes, especially but not exclusively,:

- No meat or any other slaughter products, (e.g. offal).
- No fish or any other marine animals.
- No eggs from birds reared in cages (including 'enriched cages' and small group-housing systems)
- No eggs obtained by killing animals (e.g. caviar).
- No dairy products where animal rennet was used.
- No royal jelly.
- No colouring agents obtained by killing animals (e.g. real carmine).
- No aromas, fragrances, or flavourings of animal origin, except if the substance corresponds to the definition in the above paragraph.
- No substances bleached with animal charcoal.
- No carrier substances of animal origin, except if the substance corresponds to the definition in the above paragraph.
- No substances clarified with animal substances such as gelatine or fish bladder, except if the substance corresponds to the definition in the above paragraph.
- No substances manufactured, obtained, or produced from the above-mentioned substances.

## 2.3 Culture media

The aforementioned vegan and vegetarian definitions refer to all stages of production and processing and thus include the processes of biotechnological production of ingredients or substances. Biotechnological methods are methods in which bacteria, fungi, algae, eukaryotic unicellular organisms, and/or cell cultures for the production and/or modification of the ingredients are deliberately added. For example, the last-used culture media, fermenter substrates, and/or carrier materials in the production of ingredients or substances which are part of the final product must also fulfil the aforementioned criteria for vegan ingredients or substances and vegetarian ingredients or substances respectively.

## 2.4 Guidelines for unintended traces

All stages of production, processing, and distribution should be designed in a way that there is no unintended presence of non-vegan or non-vegetarian substances respectively. The unintended presence of non-vegan or non-vegetarian substances should be less than 0.1 % (1g/kg) in the final product. If the benchmark of 0.1 % is exceeded, the producer is obliged to improve all stages of production, processing and distribution. If optimisation is not possible, the producer has to state reasons for this. Provided that the producer has made all the arrangements to avoid contamination with non-vegan or non-vegetarian substances, a deviation from the benchmark of 0.1 % does not automatically result in an exclusion of the 'vegan' or 'vegetarian' V-Label.

## 2.5 Genetically modified organisms (GMOs)

Products that require GMO-labelling according to applicable laws cannot be licensed with the V-Label.

## 2.6 Animal testing

Tests of any kind on animals must not be carried out or have been carried out for the end product. Also, animal testing of individual ingredients, auxiliaries, and other substances used for processing are not allowed if they are carried out specifically for the end product. This applies to the licensee as well as the producer (if not the same as the licensee) directly and on behalf of the same; for example, for the purpose of research, development, and/or production, including animal testing under the guidance of government agencies at home and abroad. Exceptions are permitted only if the main benefit of the product to be tested is for the species on which the product is being tested and the tests, similar to clinical tests on humans, do not affect the health and well-being of the animal. For example, it is permissible to feed vegetarian dog food over a longer period of time to domestic dogs (of dog owners voluntarily willing to participate in the study) and to regularly check the health of the dog by a veterinarian during this period.

## 2.7 Definition of 'animal'

The V-Label defines animals as multicellular eukaryotic organisms (organisms whose cells have a nucleus enclosed within membranes) that do not derive their metabolic energy from sunlight like plants do, need oxygen to breathe and are not fungi. This includes all vertebrates and invertebrates.

## 2.8 Inspections

Licensees accept that regular inspections commissioned by the licensors will be carried out.

## 2.10 Trace labelling in addition to the V-Label

Trace labelling is voluntary information provided by companies for the non-intended presence of substances which might be of animal origin. If there is a trace of animal substance in products labelled as vegetarian or vegan, it does not mean that these products are in violation of the requirements of the V-Label.

Only the deliberate use of non-vegan or non-vegetarian substances is excluded from the V-Label. This includes all precursors and constituents of the substances used as well as processing aids. In most cases, a trace does not mean that animal substances are actually contained in the end product; rather, the statement refers to the theoretically possible presence of minimal traces. A claim that a product is vegan or vegetarian is not precluded by the unintended presence of animal products, from either an ethical or from an environmental point of view, if and to the extent that this is technically unavoidable at all stages of production, processing, and distribution, despite appropriate precautions being taken in compliance with good manufacturing practices. In concrete terms, this means that all necessary precautions must be taken to clean up the production facilities and to ensure that animal products do not get into contact with vegan or vegetarian products. The purchase of vegan or vegetarian products (possibly) contaminated with animal substances does not contribute to the increased use of animals, environmental degradation, or resource waste.

In the specification form, which must be available to the V-Label team, manufacturers have to sign a commitment that they are ensuring this good manufacturing practice in their production processes, as stated in 2.4 Guidelines for unintended traces

[Click here for further information on the position of the licensor regarding traces](#)

### 3. Licencing procedure

Before a product can be labelled with the V-Label, the product must be checked by an organisation authorised by the V-Label GmbH to award V-Label licences. The licensee (usually the producer) must disclose to the licensor the full composition of the product to be certified as well as the use of all processing aids. Changes to the recipe and/or the use of processing aids, as well as any change of suppliers, must be reported immediately and independently to the responsible organisation. The licensor must be given the opportunity to carry out inspections at the production site. The V-Label may only be used as long as a valid licence certificate exists for the respective product. A V-Label licence is valid for a maximum of one year. All information and documents are kept confidential. However, they might be shared with other V-Label licensor organisations and the V-Label GmbH.

#### 3.1 Costs

Licencing is linked to a licence fee and a one-time examination fee (which is obtained per recipe test). These possible inspections are charged separately. For this, we will gladly provide you with an offer if you submit the registration form on our website. This fee will depend on various factors, such as the total turnover of the company and the number of products to be licensed or net turnover.

#### 3.2 Documents for examination

All licensees will have access to the V-Label website's customer area. These documents form the basis of the product test. They include the *specification form*, which must always be submitted in full and the *supplier confirmation* for critical substances. These critical substances, which may be of potential animal or non-vegetarian origin, are listed in the list of critical ingredients. Please refer to the preamble to the specification form for instructions on how to complete the application.

#### 3.3 Duration of the licencing process

With a standard licensing, please count on a processing time of about 20 working days, depending on the number and complexity of your recipes.

## 4. Inspections under the V-Label

### 4.1 Inspections of production facilities

The licensor has the right to carry out regular inspections of the production facilities.

### 4.2 Laboratory controls

The licensor also reserves the right to have laboratory tests carried out to determine whether certain animal ingredients or contaminations are present.

This is done, for example, in the following cases:

- When specific questions cannot be answered on the spot during the inspection.
- When it is unclear whether the requirements for 'vegan' or 'vegetarian' are being respected.
- When there are doubts about compliance with the benchmark for contamination with animal substances.
- In case of complaints concerning the vegan or vegetarian characteristics.
- Within the framework of random sample controls

## 5. V-Label use on your product

### 5.1 Vegan or vegetarian label?

Whether the vegan or vegetarian label can be used on the product depends on the examination. If a product tested and licensed by the licensor fulfils the criteria for 'vegan', only the vegan label is allowed. The 'vegetarian' label must not be used on a vegan-examined article.

### 5.2 Styleguide

The V-Label is a registered figurative trademark and should therefore be reproduced faithfully in order to ensure recognition. It must be applied to your product packaging or labelling so that the customer can recognise at first glance which category (vegetarian or vegan) it is. The V-Label, including the category subtitle, should be easy to read, stand out, and be rendered in colour. The graphic files as well as a detailed style guide are available for download in the [customer area](#) of our website, where you will also find the graphic files for internationally offered assets. You will receive the password by email. The print approval of packaging layouts bearing the V-Label is always carried out by the licensor.

### 5.3 Recipe suggestions on the product

Should recipes or preparation recommendations be shown on the product packaging in the food sector, we recommend that these be vegan or vegetarian, depending on which label is used. Contradictory statements on the packaging and uncertainty on the part of the consumer can thus be avoided.

### 5.4 Licensed territory

The V-Label is available worldwide. The current list of countries with trademark registration is revised quarterly and will be made available by the licensor upon request.

## 6. Frequently asked questions

### 6.1 Packaging

Before printing any packaging bearing the V-Label, the licensee is obligated to have the layout checked and approved by the licensor. The materials of the packaging itself are not checked for animal substances by the licensor. Thus, for example, a product which is packaged in a cardboard box containing bone glue can still be awarded the V-Label. Again, due to growing consumer awareness of, it is recommended to voluntarily dispense with packaging containing animal components.

### 6.2 Fertilisation and cultivation

During the V-Label licencing, the products and ingredients are taken into account from harvest or mining onwards. This means, there are no requirements for fertilising the soil on which raw materials are grown for V-Label products. Thus, vegetable raw materials whose area under cultivation has been fertilised with substances of animal origin are allowed. The following types of fertiliser are allowed, among others,:

- Spreading of animal excrements
- Chemical fertilisation with non-vegan substances

However, due to the growing awareness of environmentally and ethically conscious consumers, it is recommended, wherever possible, to rather use raw materials from vegan-organic agriculture and to dispense with animal substances during fertilisation. Burial of slaughter products (e.g. innards, horns), as is customary in biodynamic farming, is permitted. Individual unprocessed mono products, e.g. mushrooms, etc., may be subject to further requirements if these cannot be vegan exclusively because of their fertilisation.

### 6.3 Gastronomy and non-food products

Every V-Label licensor licenses food but not everyone licenses gastronomy or non-food products in addition. For more information on which product categories can be licensed please contact the licensor.

## 7. Final clause

The requirements and examples formulated in this document are not exhaustive. In case of doubt or in response to new developments, V-Label GmbH reserves the right to make further requirements and/or adapt these to the current state of knowledge. In all cases, agreements made bilaterally with the respective licensor organisation shall continue to apply.