

Start with the capsule shell. Before comparing the active ingredients in a supplement, check whether the capsule is made from plant-based cellulose or animal-derived gelatin. Softgels deserve the same scrutiny: many use gelatin, though plant-based alternatives exist. A product can feature a “vegan” headline and still leave shoppers guessing about the delivery system, so the label’s details matter as much as its front-panel claims.

That’s one reason third-party vegan certifications can be useful. The **Certified Vegan label** and the **Vegan Society trademark** both help shoppers identify products that meet defined vegan criteria, but they are separate programs with their own requirements and review processes. Neither label is a shortcut around reading the ingredients, checking allergen statements, or asking manufacturers about unclear details.

Here’s how the two marks compare, what “vegan” means on a U.S. label, and what to check when choosing supplements, foods, cosmetics, or other products.

The short answer: two separate vegan certification programs

The Vegan Society trademark is administered by The Vegan Society, a UK-based organization that introduced the trademark in 1990. The Certified Vegan program is administered by Vegan Action, a U.S.-based nonprofit. Both programs assess products against vegan-related standards, but one certification does not automatically mean a product has earned the other.

Feature Vegan Society trademark Certified Vegan label Who administers it? The Vegan Society Vegan Action What does the mark indicate? The product has been assessed against The Vegan Society’s trademark criteria. The product has been assessed against Vegan Action’s certification criteria. Are the programs identical? No. They are independent programs. Check each organization’s current criteria for details. Does certification replace label reading? No. Review ingredients, capsule materials, allergens, and any claims that matter to you.

Both marks offer more than a manufacturer simply calling its own product vegan: they signal that an external organization has reviewed the product under a defined program. Still, certification isn’t a guarantee that every shopper’s personal standard is met. People may have different expectations about manufacturing lines, supplier practices, or environmental impacts, so check the certifier’s published rules and contact the company when a point matters to you.

What does each mark cover?

The Vegan Society trademark

The Vegan Society describes its trademark criteria in terms of avoiding animal ingredients and animal testing, among other requirements. Its standards and application process are maintained by the organization, and its trademark is used on products that have been registered and approved for the mark. Criteria can cover ingredients and the way products are developed or manufactured, so the logo is more informative than an unsupported front-label claim.

Look for the recognizable sunflower logo, then verify the product listing if you’re unsure whether a particular item is registered. A company may make vegan products without using the trademark, while a logo on one product does not necessarily certify every item from the same brand.



The Certified Vegan label

Vegan Action’s Certified Vegan program also provides a recognizable mark for products that meet its certification requirements. The program assesses whether animal products and byproducts are used in the product and considers animal-testing requirements set by the certifier. For details—especially for products with complex supply chains—consult Vegan Action’s current standards rather than assuming the mark answers every question a shopper might have.

The important distinction is administrative: the marks come from different organizations, and each organization sets and applies its own program rules. If a package carries both marks, that indicates the product has been reviewed by both programs, not that the logos are interchangeable.

Why “vegan” on its own can be hard to interpret in the U.S.

In the United States, “vegan” does not have one comprehensive federal definition that applies consistently across every type of consumer product. That means a word or phrase on a package is not, by itself, the same thing as independent certification against a published vegan standard.

That doesn’t mean companies can make any claim they like. Product claims may still be subject to rules against deceptive or misleading advertising. But shoppers may not know from the word alone how a company handles animal-derived processing aids, shared equipment, supplier documentation, or testing policies. A third-party mark can make the basis for a claim easier to investigate, while ingredient lists and company disclosures remain important.

For people who compete in tested sports, have strict ethical requirements, or need to avoid a particular ingredient, ask specific questions. “Is it vegan?” may get a general answer. “Is the capsule shell gelatin-free, and are any processing aids animal-derived?” is more likely to surface the useful details.

Hidden animal-derived ingredients to watch for

Some animal-derived ingredients are obvious, such as whey, casein, honey, or gelatin. Others are less clear from the name alone, and ingredients can vary by source or manufacturing method. Keep a running note of ingredients

that sound planty but are not—or, more accurately, ingredients whose source you can't identify from the name alone.

- **Gelatin:** Common in conventional capsules and softgels; it is generally made from animal collagen.
- **Glycerin:** Can come from plant or animal sources. Ask the manufacturer if the source is not specified.
- **Stearic acid and magnesium stearate:** May be derived from plant or animal fats, depending on the supplier.
- **Vitamin D3:** Often made from lanolin, though non-animal alternatives are available. Check the source rather than relying on the ingredient name.
- **Colorants and coatings:** Some products use ingredients such as carmine, which is insect-derived, or shellac, which is made from insect secretions.
- **Flavorings and processing aids:** Sources may not be obvious from a short ingredient declaration.

And don't skip the allergen statement because the front label looks clean. It may disclose relevant allergens or shared-facility information, though it does not necessarily answer whether every ingredient or processing aid is vegan. If a label says "natural flavors," don't assume that tells you the source. Ask the brand to clarify whether the flavors are plant-derived and whether any animal-derived carriers or processing aids are used.

Capsule shells, softgels, and supplement paperwork

Supplement labels are a classic place for a vegan mismatch. An active ingredient might be plant-based while the capsule is gelatin, or the formula may include a flow agent or carrier whose origin is not stated. Read the "other ingredients" line as closely as the nutrition or supplement facts panel.

Look for clearly described shell materials such as hydroxypropyl methylcellulose (often abbreviated HPMC) or another stated plant-based capsule material. A softgel needs particular attention because the traditional shell is gelatin-based. "Vegetarian capsule" or "plant capsule" can athleisuremag.com be helpful language, but if the material is not named, ask the manufacturer what it means.

For quality and identity questions, a **Certificate of analysis (COA)** can provide useful batch-specific test information, depending on what the company's document includes. A COA may report results for identity, potency, contaminants, or other tests; it does not automatically prove that a product is vegan. Likewise, **Batch lab reports** can help you evaluate testing and traceability, but you still need ingredient-source documentation or a credible certification to answer vegan questions.

Ask a brand whether its COA corresponds to the lot number on your bottle, and whether it can provide documentation about capsule materials and ingredient sources. A thorough response should distinguish what the company has verified from what it has not. Certifications, COAs, and lab reports answer different questions; none should be treated as a substitute for all the others.



Vegan certification is not the same as USDA Organic

“Organic” and “vegan” describe different things. USDA Organic rules govern how eligible agricultural ingredients are produced and how products are certified and labeled. They do not establish that a product contains no animal-derived ingredients. Organic products can contain ingredients such as dairy, eggs, or honey, provided the product meets the applicable organic requirements.

The percentage language on organic food labels matters, too. In general, a product labeled **“organic”** must contain at least 95% organically produced ingredients, excluding water and salt, and may use the USDA Organic seal when it meets the program requirements. A product labeled **“made with organic [specified ingredients or food groups]”** must contain at least 70% organic ingredients, but it cannot use the USDA Organic seal. Products with less than 70% organic ingredients may identify specific organic ingredients in the ingredient statement, subject to the rules.

Those percentages tell you about organic content—not whether the product is vegan, whether its capsule is gelatin-free, or whether animal testing was conducted. If both organic sourcing and vegan ingredients matter to you, check for each claim separately and look for the documentation or certification relevant to that claim.

How to choose between the marks

For most shoppers, the best choice is not about declaring one certification universally superior. It is about understanding which program’s criteria align with your needs and whether the specific product has been approved. Use this practical checklist:

1. **Check the exact product.** A company’s general statement about its brand does not certify every product it sells.
2. **Inspect the complete ingredient list.** Include capsule shells, softgels, coatings, flavors, carriers, and “other ingredients.”
3. **Read allergen and precautionary statements.** They provide useful safety information, even though they are not a full vegan certification.
4. **Look up the mark.** Confirm what the certifier’s current standards cover and whether the product is included.

5. **Ask about unclear sources.** Request the origin of ingredients such as glycerin, magnesium stearate, or vitamin D3 when it is not specified.
6. **Match documents to the question.** Use a COA or Batch lab reports for the testing information they actually contain, not as proof of vegan status unless the documentation directly supports that claim.

How brands and reviewers can make claims clearer

Brands can help by naming capsule materials, identifying ingredient sources when they vary, and linking to current certification details. A vague “vegan-friendly” claim gives shoppers less to evaluate than a clear ingredient list plus a recognizable third-party mark. Retailers and reviewers can also distinguish between certified products and products that are simply described as vegan by the manufacturer.

For example, editorial coverage from outlets such as *Athleisure Mag* can introduce readers to wellness products, but shoppers should still check the product’s own label and certification status. Similarly, a brand name is not a substitute for product-level evidence: if you’re considering something from Joy Organics, evaluate the specific product and its current packaging, ingredients, and certifications rather than inferring its status from the company name or category.

The bottom line

The Vegan Society trademark and the Certified Vegan label are independent third-party programs that help shoppers identify products assessed under vegan criteria. They are not interchangeable, and the exact coverage depends on each organization’s current standards. In the U.S., “vegan” is not governed by one comprehensive federal definition across all consumer products, so a claim alone may leave important questions unanswered.

Start with the capsule shell, then check the active ingredients, softgels, excipients, flavors, allergens, and certification details. Keep organic claims in a separate category: USDA Organic percentages describe organic content, not vegan status. When something is unclear, ask the company directly—and use certification records, ingredient documentation, a COA, and Batch lab reports for the specific questions each can answer.