

# **Organic Livestock**

March 2018



# Origin of Livestock

- Livestock for meat production must be under full organic management no later than last third of gestation.
- Breeding stock may be obtained from conventional sources, but can't be sold as organic slaughter stock





# Origin of Livestock

- Poultry must be under continuous organic management beginning no later than the second day of life (i.e. “day old chicks”).
- Older birds grown under conventional management can only be used as breeder stock for hatching eggs.





# Origin of Livestock

- Dairy animals must be under organic management for 1 year prior to milk being organic.
- If whole herd and farm are being transitioned together, the herd can be fed third-year transitional feed from that farm; allows farm to transition in 3 years.





# Livestock Feed

- All feed, pasture and forage must be organically produced
- Allowed substances may be used as additives and supplements (vitamins, minerals)



Flax meal



Pasture



# Pasture Requirement

- During the grazing season, ruminant animals must be able to obtain feed grazed from pasture
  - Not less than 120 days/year (not necessarily continuous)
  - Pasture must account for 30% of their Dry Matter Intake/DMI on average





# Pasture for Organic Ruminant Livestock:

## *Understanding and Implementing the National Organic Program (NOP) Pasture Rule*

By Lee Rinehart and Ann Baier  
National Center for Appropriate  
Technology (NCAT)  
Agriculture Specialists  
May 2011

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The National Organic Program (NOP) regulations establishing parameters for pasture grazing of ruminant livestock became law on June 17, 2010 (USDA, 2010d). Existing certified organic operations must be in compliance by June 17, 2011, while operations certified after June 17, 2010, must be in compliance before attaining certification.

This publication offers a summary of several key provisions within the NOP regulations (see Appendix 3) as they pertain to pasture management, access to pasture, feed, and grazing intake by ruminant livestock—collectively, referred to as the “Pasture Rule”. It also assists producers in implementing the provisions of the rule. It includes tools for calculating dry matter intake (DMI) and conducting grazing management.

## Introduction

This publication provides a thorough picture of what organic producers are required to do to maintain compliance with the Pasture Rule. When applying the new requirements to their current farming practices, many producers with well-developed pasture resources find that their operations are already compliant or quite close to compliance. All organic ruminant livestock producers, whether certified or transitioning, need to understand the new recordkeeping requirements. Keeping good records is essential for producers to achieve and document compliance, so this publication also discusses recordkeeping practices and resources to assist producers in developing a pasture management plan.

The central components of the Pasture Rule relate to grazing and pasture management. Ruminant animals must graze pasture during the grazing season for their geographic region, which must be at least 120 days per year. Over the course of the grazing season, the animals must obtain an average of at least 30 percent dry matter intake by grazing. Additionally, animals must have year-round access to outdoors, and roughages used for bedding must be certified organic. Temporary confinement is allowed for some management and health care procedures, as well as during inclement weather and to reduce risk to soil and water quality. Lactation is not an acceptable reason for confinement. In addition, producers must have a pasture management plan and manage pasture as a crop to meet the feed requirements for grazing animals and to protect soil and water quality.

## National Scope of Organic Ruminant Livestock Operations

The National Organic Program regulates organic ruminant farms and ranches across the

## Grazing Season Ration Period Dry Matter Intake (DMI) Calculation for Organic Ruminant Livestock

### Worksheet B:

### Calculating the Average DMI from Pasture for the Grazing Season

**Instructions:** Use this Worksheet B to calculate the average DMI from grazing for each type and class of animal over the entire grazing season. Use all completed Grazing/Ration Period DMI Calculation Worksheet A's for a type and class of animal to provide input into this worksheet. Please note: While these worksheets provide one way to document your compliance with organic standards, they are not required forms; you may provide another method for calculating DMD and DMI.

Operation Name / Year:	Class of Animal <input type="checkbox"/> Calf / Lamb / Kid <input type="checkbox"/> Heifer / Young Stock <input type="checkbox"/> Lactating <input type="checkbox"/> Dry <input type="checkbox"/> Breeding <input type="checkbox"/> Slaughter <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify):
Total # Days in Grazing Season (from table below = Total # of Days Fed during the Grazing Season):	# Animals in Group:

Using your completed Worksheets A, enter the ration dates, number of days fed, and % DMI from pasture for each distinct feed ration period during the grazing season in the table below. To calculate the weighted average DMI from pasture for the entire grazing season, multiply the % DMI for each grazing/ration period by the number of days in that period, then divide the sum of those numbers by the total number of days in the grazing season (all grazing/ration periods), and multiply by 100 to convert this number to a percentage.

Ration Name/Type/ID	Dates Fed	# of Days Fed	x	Daily DMI from Pasture (from DMI worksheet)	=	DMI from Pasture during period
			x		=	
			x		=	
			x		=	
			x		=	
Totals						
Total DMI from Pasture	÷	Total Days in Grazing Season (x 100 to convert to percent)		=	Grazing Season Average % DMI	



# Pasture Requirement

## Exceptions:

- Temporary confinement with outdoor access when pasturing animals can lead to excessive soil compaction or for some health care reasons (not lactation).
- During finishing (1/5<sup>th</sup> of life or 120 days), livestock are exempt from 30%, but must be maintained on pasture during grazing season.

# Why your 'organic' milk may not be organic

By **Peter Whoriskey** May 1 



Aurora Organic Dairy's massive Colorado complex one of the country's largest suppliers of organic milk. But a Washington Post investigation found that the company's milk may not be as organic as it promises. (Jorge Ribas, McKenna Ewen/The Washington Post)

The High Plains dairy complex reflects the new scale of the U.S. organic industry: It is big.

Stretching across miles of pastures and feedlots north of Greeley, Colo., the complex is home to



# Pasture Plan

Livestock producers must have a pasture plan in their OSP which includes:

- Types of pasture (species) provided.
- Management practices to ensure quality and quantity of pasture throughout the grazing season.
- Location and size of pastures, including maps giving each pasture its own identification.
- Location and types of fences.
- Location and source of shade and water.
- Soil fertility and seeding systems.
- Erosion control and protection of natural wetlands and riparian areas practices.



# Pasture Considerations

- Pasture must be managed as an organic crop (transition, seeds, pest man, nutrient man)
- Buffers, possibly with secondary fencing (farm boundary)





# Pasture Considerations

Selected materials allowed for pasture management:

- Potassium chloride (muriate of potash) allowed if derived from a mined source (many are not?).
- Rock dusts including most mined minerals, such as lime/aglime (hydrated lime is produced synthetically).
- Compost, manure, etc.



# Weed Management

- Very few approved herbicides that are suitable for pasture (some for immature weeds)
- Focus on prevention:
  - Reduce bare ground (avoid over grazing, maintain dense stand, cold & warm season grasses in pasture)
  - Avoid letting weeds go to seed (grazing, mowing)
  - Soil (proper liming and fertilizer)
  - Sanitation (compost manure if possible, clean equipment, scout for weeds near pastures)

# Weed Management

- Weed Management in Organic Pastures
- Sid Bosworth, Ph.D.,  
Extension Agronomist,  
University of Vermont

## ***Weed Management in Organic Pasture***



You can [view](#) this on-demand webinar at any time.

**Participate for a better understanding of pasture weed biology and organic methods for control and management.**

Participate in this training to learn about organic management of pasture weeds. Emphasis will be placed on cultural, mechanical, and biological control of pasture weeds with specific weed examples highlighted. Organically approved chemical control of pasture weeds will also be reviewed.

This webinar is presented by the USDA NRCS East and West National Technology Support Centers.



### ***Related Files***

- [Presentation slides.pdf](#) (4836Kb)



No treated lumber in contact with soil or livestock





# Treated Wood

- Fence, structures, compost facility (unless barrier or way to prevent contact)
- Existing treated wood may be permitted if it does not represent a significant contamination hazard
- New or replacement construction may not contain any prohibited materials where they can contact organic soil, crops, or animals.
- Treated wood not “application of prohibited substance” that requires 3 year land transition.

# Pastured Poultry



- Across the Creek farm in West Fork, Arkansas
- Raising 10,000/yr broilers on pasture & hens
- ~34 acres
- Not certified organic, but non-GMO feed, no antibiotics/hormones, all pasture
- Former organic inspector and ATTRA livestock specialist

Questions?  
Comments?





# Livestock living conditions





# Livestock Living Conditions

- Year-round livestock living conditions which accommodate the health and natural behavior of animals
- Continuous total confinement indoors, or in yards, feeding pads, and feedlots is prohibited.
  - OK in non-grazing season or for supplemental feeding





# Livestock Living Conditions

- Year-round access to the outdoors, shade, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air, clean water for drinking, and direct sunlight...
- ...must be well-drained and managed to prevent runoff of wastes and contaminated waters.





# Livestock Living Conditions

Livestock may be confined for a short time for the following reasons:

- Inclement weather
- Specific health and safety needs of the animal
- Risk to soil or water quality (compaction)
- The animal's stage of life (baby chicks, controlled mating)





# Natural Resources & Biodiversity

Topics	NRCS Assistance May Be Available <sup>3</sup>	Examples of Activities <sup>4</sup>
<b>Examples Relevant to All Types of Organic Certification</b>		
Soil Stability and Water Quality	☑	Creating, conserving, and restoring vegetative covers (forests, shrublands, woodlands, grasslands, riparian areas, and wetland areas) that control erosion and filter nutrient, pesticide, and pathogen pollutants. Minimizing disturbances, maximizing diversity, living roots and cover.
	☑	Using no-till or permanent cover, conservation tillage, terracing, contour farming, micro-irrigation, windbreaks, cover crops, grass waterways and soil health practices.

# Soil Stability & Water Quality

**Maintaining or improving natural resources (example):**

Frequency, intensity, and timing of grazing is closely managed to protect soil and water quality; animals moved every few days to new paddock while leaving adequate forage and not overgrazing.



# Supporting Wildlife

**Maintaining or improving natural resources (example):**

Using wildlife friendly fencing and non-lethal predator control before lethal methods (e.g., guard animals, grazing large and small animals together, or housing vulnerable animals overnight).



# Supporting Wildlife

**Maintaining or improving natural resources (example):**

Using strategic mowing, tilling, and harvesting methods to preserve sites where wildlife raise their young.





# Livestock Health Care

- The producer must establish and maintain preventive livestock health care practices (selection of species, sanitation, nutrition, non-GMO vaccines, etc)
- When prevention fails, medical treatment must be given.
- However, if antibiotics are used, can't be sold as organic.





# Livestock Health Care

- No hormones for growth or breeding promotion.
- GMO probiotics not allowed
- Some de-wormers/parasiticides allowed as emergency if other prevention fails in dairy, but can't sell dairy products for 90 days
  - not allowed for meat production.





# Livestock Health Care

- Parasites can be a challenge
- Focus on prevention and good nutrition
- Grazing management (multispecies-cows don't share parasites with goats/sheep)
- Diatomaceous earth (DE) used by some producers for internal
- Soaps, DE, plant oils used for external parasites (lice, ticks, etc)

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A program of the National Center for Appropriate Technology | 1-800-345-9110 | www.attra.ncat.org



## Tipsheet: Organic Management of Internal and External Livestock Parasites



Photo: Robyn Metzger, NCAT

Livestock parasites are present on our farms. They have many attributes that allow them to survive different environments and seasons, and it is likely impossible to completely eradicate them. When parasite numbers are too high for the host animals' immune systems to control, we will observe signs of disease, including weight loss, appetite loss, depression, weakness, and, if not treated, death.

Yet animals have always coexisted with these parasites. The keys to coexisting include:

- A strong immune system
- Low exposure to parasites

A strong immune system is naturally present in some animals. Selecting those breeds and individuals is part of a good animal health strategy. Immune systems are encouraged through good nutrition and low stress, including healthy living conditions and calm handling.

Meanwhile, exposure will not overwhelm the strong immune system if parasite numbers are kept low. This is accomplished through sanitation (clean water tanks and feed troughs) and through pasture management.



# Livestock Handling

- Organic animals must be slaughtered at a certified organic facility (unless on-farm per federal/state exemptions) – can limit organic livestock
- ~3 certified facilities in KS that do meat processing/handling?
  - Frankfort Meat Processing (Frankfort, KS)
  - Kiowa Locker System (Kiowa, KS)
  - Simply Essentials (poultry; Overland Park, KS)

Questions?  
Comments?



# Resources



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**April 5, 2016, 3 p.m. EST**  
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**June 7, 2016, 3 p.m. EST**  
Weed Management in Organic Cropping Systems

**August 2, 2016, 3 p.m. EST**  
Residue and Tillage Management in Organic Farming Systems: Eastern States

**October 4, 2016, 3 p.m. EST**  
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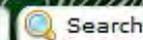
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Join this webinar to learn about the wide range of opportunities for NRCS support in organically-managed livestock operations.
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## Organic Pasture Management



You can [view](#) this on-demand webinar at any time.

**View this webinar to gain an understanding of National Organic Program regulation 205.240 Pasture Practice standards and how NRCS conservation practices and prescribed grazing plans can help organic livestock producers meet this rule.**

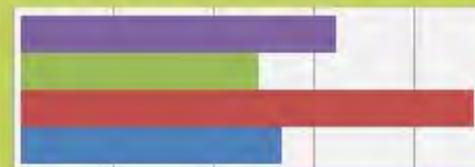
National Organic Program (NOP) regulations require that all ruminant livestock obtain a minimum of 30% of their dry matter intake from grazing throughout the growing season. Producers must be able to demonstrate through the records they keep how this has been accomplished. In this webinar, participants learn about the specifics of the new pasture management regulations, along with the contents of the grazing management plan that needs to be developed and followed to demonstrate compliance. Using the NRCS Prescribed Grazing (528) practice standard, organic livestock producers can meet the NOP regulations while improving their grazing productivity and protecting the environment. Several grazing management tools that aid in developing a grazing plan to meet the NOP regulations are demonstrated. In addition, numerous conservation practices that improve livestock watering, forage quality and livestock movement are discussed as key components of a prescribed grazing system.

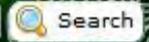
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## ***Pastured Poultry and Conservation Planning***



You can [view](#) this on-demand webinar at any time.

**This webinar will give participants an overview of pastured poultry operation including management techniques, facilities, challenges, and opportunities.**

Join the webinar for a thorough overview of the many components involved in pastured poultry operations. The advantages of raising poultry on pasture, the environmental benefits, and the infrastructure needed will be discussed. Learn the many different considerations these producers face, how organic certification changes management, and opportunities for support from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

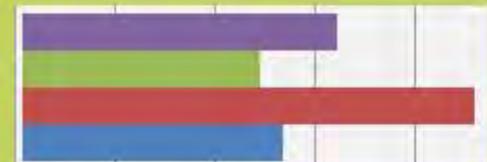
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# Guide for Organic Livestock Producers

By Linda Coffey and Ann H. Baier, National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) Agriculture Specialists  
November 2012

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## Section 1: Overview of organic certification and production

### CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This guide is an overview of the process of becoming certified organic. It is designed to explain the USDA organic regulations as they apply to livestock producers. If you are also producing crops, you will need the "Guide for Organic Producers" to understand the regulations pertaining to the land and to crop production. In addition to explaining the regulations, both guides give examples of the practices that are allowed for organic production.

The first four chapters of the crops guide are essentially the same as the first four of this guide; they give an introduction to the National Organic Program (NOP), the organic-certification process, the Organic System Plan (OSP), and much more. You can find the crops guide and many other helpful publications at [www.attra.ncat.org](http://www.attra.ncat.org). If you have already read the crops guide or if you already are familiar with the certification process, proceed to Chapter 5, "Overview of Organic Livestock Systems" in this guide.

There are four sections in this guide:

- Section 1. Overview of organic certification and production
- Section 2. Pastures and hay crops
- Section 3. Livestock
- Section 4. Handling of organic feed and livestock products

It also includes a short list of resources and brief summaries of areas of concern for poultry, swine, sheep and goats, cattle, and dairy enterprises as appendices.

### Who should read this guide?

- Conventional farmers who are deciding whether they want to become certified organic
- Farmers in the process of converting to organic practices

This guide uses the term "USDA organic regulations" and "regulations" to refer to the Federal regulations that govern organic crop production, livestock production, handling, processing, and labeling. Different terminology often is used in other publications to refer to the same regulations: "National Organic Standards," "NOP Final Rule," or simply "standards," "Rules," or "requirements" are common examples. In this guide, some of the section titles in the USDA organic regulations are referred to as "standards" to correspond with the actual text—for example, "§ 2.5.204 Seeds and planting stocks standard."

The term "standard" also is commonly used in relation to the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB). The NOSB is a citizen advisory board that helps the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) determine which substances and practices may be used in certified organic production and handling. The NOSB makes recommendations. However, these recommendations are not part of the USDA organic regulations until the USDA decides the appropriate regulatory direction after completing a formal review and receiving public comments.



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## National Scope of Organic Ruminant Livestock Operations

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# Access to Pasture Rule

Organic Agriculture

July 05, 2016

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*This is an eOrganic article and was reviewed for compliance with National Organic Program regulations by members of the eOrganic community. Always check with your organic certification agency before adopting new practices or using new materials. For more information, refer to eOrganic's articles on organic certification.*

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# How to Calculate Pasture Dry Matter Intake on Your Organic Dairy Farm Webinar

Organic Agriculture

November 09, 2015

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**How to Calculate Pasture Dry Matter Intake on Your Organic Dairy Farm**

**Table 14-6. Daily Dry Matter Demand Requirements in Kilograms and Pounds**

**Mid Lactation \*Large Breed Dairy Cows**

**25 - 45 Kilograms or 55 - 99 Pounds Daily Milk Production**

**68% Total Digestible Nutrients Diet**

Daily Milk Production (kg)	Milk Fat (%)	DMD (kg)	Daily Milk Production (lb)	Milk Fat (%)	DMD (lb)
25	3.0	19.6	55.12	3.0	43.21
25	3.5	21.0	55.12	3.5	44.75
25	4.0	22.4	55.12	4.0	46.30
35	3.0	24.5	77.16	3.0	50.04
35	3.5	25.9	77.16	3.5	52.03
35	4.0	27.3	77.16	4.0	54.01
45	3.0	29.4	99.21	3.0	56.66
45	3.5	30.8	99.21	3.5	59.30
45	4.0	32.2	99.21	4.0	61.95

Abbreviations used in table:  
DMD = Dry Matter Demand, kg = Kilogram, lb = Pound

\*Large Breed Live Weight = 680 Kilograms or 1,499 Pounds

Adapted from: "Table 14-6," from *Nutrient Requirements of Dairy Cattle: Seventh Revised Edition, 2001*, by Subcommittee on Dairy Cattle Nutrition, Committee on Animal Nutrition, National Research Council, 2001. Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press. Copyright 2001 by National Academy of Sciences.

This webinar was recorded on August 20, 2010  
 The slides from the Webinar are available here as a pdf file.

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