

# Guidance for Livestock Production

**This document does not supersede current USDA Regulations.**

**ICO Guidelines provide a summary of the main NOP organic production requirements. For full detailed information on NOP organic production, please refer to and download NOP Regulation updates on USDA website: [www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/NOP](http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/NOP)**

## I. INTRODUCTION

This guideline provides a summary of the NOP requirements for livestock farming regarding cattle, sheep, goats, swine, poultry or equine animals used for food or in the production of food, fiber, feed or other agricultural-based consumer products.

*NOTE: wild or domesticated game or other live animals (e.g. bees) with exception of aquatic animals may also be certified but are not the focus of these guidelines.*

Operating a NOP organic production unit requires detailed study of the full NOP standards. As described in ECOCERT ICO [NOP Certification Process \(TS02\)](#), the Organic System Plan shall include detailed information demonstrating how the NOP requirements are to be met.

## II. CATEGORICALLY PROHIBITED PRACTICES (§205.105)

NOP requirements prohibit any methods for raising organic livestock using genetically modify organisms (except for vaccines when applicable) or impacting their growth and development through means that cannot be achieved under natural conditions (GMOs). Cloning is also forbidden. Furthermore the use of ionizing radiation and the application of sewage sludge are not allowed for the production of animal feed and feedstuffs.

## III. ORIGIN OF LIVESTOCK (§ 205.236)

### A. GENERAL RULES

Organic livestock products must be produced from livestock under continuous organic management **from the last third of the gestation or from the second day after hatching.**

All animals intended to be sold as organic **slaughter stock** must have been raised under continuous organic management from the last third of gestation or from the second day after hatching; this also applies to breeder or dairy stock on the operation.

**Non-organic animals may not be converted into organic slaughter stock (meat, wool).**

The producer must maintain records sufficient to keep track of the identity of all organically managed animals and edible and non edible animal products produced on the operation.

### B. EXCEPTIONS (use of non-organic animals)

#### **POULTRY:**

Non-organic chicks under 2-days old may be introduced into the operation (for eggs or slaughter production). They must be under continuous organic management once introduced in the operation.

#### **DAIRY ANIMALS:**

Creation or conversion of a herd from non organic animals: Milk or milk products may be sold, labeled, or represented as organic when animals have been under continuous organic management for at least 1 year.

During that 12 month period, dairy animals may be fed with crops and forage produced from acreage included in the OSP of the dairy farm, which is in the third year of organic management.

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Once an entire distinct herd has been converted to organic production, all dairy animals shall be under organic management from the last third of gestation.

## **BREEDER STOCK:**

Male: May be non-organic and brought onto an organic operation at any time

Female : May be non-organic and brought onto an organic operation at any time but no later than the last 1/3 of the gestation in order for the offspring to be organic. She may nurse her own calves as long as she is managed organically (even if the milk could not be sold as organic).

No limitation of age, sex, % or quantity for non organic breeders.

Embryo transfer and in-vitro fertilization are allowed but cloning is forbidden.

## **C. PROHIBITED PRACTICES**

Livestock, which are removed from an organic operation and then non-organically managed, lose their organic slaughter status permanently, products from these animals may no longer be certified as organic without a full one year conversion period under organic management.

## **IV. LIVESTOCK FEED (§205.237)**

### **A. GENERAL RULES**

The agricultural products of a feed ration (including pasture and forage) must be organically produced and certified. (*Except: during the year of conversion, dairy animals may be fed with crops and forage from land in the 3rd year of conversion and included in the OSP of the dairy farm*).

Synthetic substances allowed under § 205.603 (vitamins, trace minerals) and non-synthetic substances other than those listed in § 205.604 may be used as feed additives and feed supplements; **however additives and/or supplements of agricultural origin must be organic**.

### **B. PROHIBITED FEED MATERIALS**

- ✓ Animal drugs, including hormones, used to promote growth
- ✓ Feed supplements and additives in quantities above the needs of the animals
- ✓ Plastic pellets for roughage
- ✓ Feed formulas containing urea or manure
- ✓ Feed made out of mammalian or poultry slaughter by-products for mammals or poultry
- ✓ Feed or forage **with** added antibiotic or ionophores

### **C. ACCESS TO PASTURE FOR RUMINANTS**

Except under specific conditions, it is forbidden to prevent, restrain and withhold **ruminants** from actively obtaining feed grazed from pasture during the grazing season.

Producers must establish a management plan for the pasture and incorporate this plan into their OSP. An updated Pasture Plan must be provided to the certifier annually.

#### **1) Grazing Season**

Grazing season is the period of time when pasture is **available** for grazing, due to natural precipitation or irrigation. Grazing season dates may vary because of mid-summer heat/humidity, significant precipitation events, floods, hurricanes, droughts or winter weather events. Grazing season may be extended by the **grazing of residual forage** as agreed in the OSP. Due to weather, season, or climate, the grazing season may or may not be continuous. Grazing season may range from 120 days to 365 days, but **not less than 120 days per year**.

NOTE: the grazing season is different from the longer growing season. Indeed, the growing season for the pasture is from last frost to first frost, the grazing season is only the period when the forage is available for grazing.

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## 2) Quality and quantity of the pasture

Producers must provide ruminants with pasture throughout the grazing season for their geographical location and ensure ruminants derive not less than an average of **30 %** of their **Dry Matter Intake (DMI)** requirement from pasture grazed over the course of the grazing season.

Producers must:

- ✓ Provide no more than an average of 70 % of a ruminant **Dry Matter Demand (DMD)** from *dry matter fed*(\*)

(\*) *dry matter fed*: every feed other than dry matter grazed from residual forage (forage cut or windrowed and left to lie in place in the pasture) or vegetation rooted in pasture

- ✓ Provide ruminants with a pasture of a sufficient quality and quantity to graze with an average  $\geq$  30% of their **Dry Matter Intake (DMI)** from grazing

**DMD** = the expected **DMI** for a class of animal

**DMI** is calculated as an average over the entire grazing season for each type and class of animal (e.g. dairy cow –lactating, beef bred replacement, heifer, beef steer—slaughter stock)

NOTE: If animals are managed in multiple, separate class/type sub-groups, then the DMI must be calculated as an average for each class/type sub-groups.

## 3) Exemptions on the required average of 30% DMI from grazing during the grazing season

- ✓ When animals are temporarily confined or in shelter or temporarily denied pasture (see details below in “Livestock living conditions”), they must meet the requirement of a minimum of 30% of their DMI from grazing only throughout the periods that they are actually on pasture.
- ✓ Breeding bulls may be exempted from the required 30% DMI from grazing, they can be confined or tethered but may not be sold as organic slaughter stock if maintained under this exemption.
- ✓ Finishing period for ruminant slaughter stock (see details below in “Livestock living conditions”)

## D. FEED RECORDS

Livestock producers shall maintain records with a description of the total feed ration for each type and class of animal as follow:

- ✓ All feed produced on-farm;
- ✓ All feed purchased from off-farm sources;
- ✓ The percentage of each feed type, including pasture for ruminants, in the total ration
- ✓ A list of all feed supplements and additives.

Ruminant livestock producers shall also document the amount of each type of feed actually fed to each type and class of animal and the changes made to all rations throughout the year due to seasonal grazing changes. Producers shall be able to show their method for calculating DMD and DMI.

## V. **LIVESTOCK HEALTH CARE PRACTICES (§ 205.238)**

### A. DISEASE PREVENTION (preventive practices)

The producer must establish and maintain the following preventive livestock health care practices:

- ✓ selection of breeds that are resistant to diseases and parasites and suited to the regional ecology
- ✓ healthy feed rations to meet all nutritional requirements
- ✓ comfortable housing, pasture and living conditions and appropriate sanitation
- ✓ conditions which allow for exercise, freedom of movement, and reduction of stress
- ✓ physical alterations only if necessary and done to promote animal’s welfare, performed in a manner that minimizes pain and stress to the animal
- ✓ administration of vaccines and other veterinary biologics (*all viruses, serums, toxins and analogous products of natural or synthetic origin*).

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## **B. VETERINARY TREATMENT**

When preventive practices and veterinary biologics are inadequate to prevent sickness, **synthetic medication** can be administered to animals but only if the medicines are allowed under § 205.603 (only on the order of a licensed veterinarian and with a defined withdrawal period for certain products).

Furthermore **parasiticides** listed in §205-603 may only be used under the following conditions:

- ✓ For breeder stock : prior to the last 1/3 of gestation and not during lactation for progeny intended to be sold as organic
- ✓ For dairy stock : with a minimum of 90 days prior to the production of milk intended to be sold as organic
- ✓ **Slaughter stock : NO Synthetic PARASITICIDES PERMITTED.**

## **C. PROHIBITED PRACTICES**

- ✓ Treatment of animals with **antibiotics**, synthetic substances not allowed under §205.603, and non-synthetic substances listed in § 205.604 (e.g. strychnine)
- ✓ Administration of any drugs, other than vaccinations, in the absence of illness (as a preventive measure)
- ✓ Administration of growth hormones
- ✓ Administration of synthetic parasiticides on a routine basis
- ✓ Withholding medical treatment from a sick animal in an effort to preserve its organic status

Livestock treated with a prohibited substance must be clearly identified and shall not be sold or represented as organic.

## **VI. LIVESTOCK LIVING CONDITIONS (§ 205.239)**

### **A. GENERAL RULES FOR ALL LIVESTOCK**

#### **1) Living conditions meeting the needs of animals' health and natural behavior**

- ✓ Year-round access for all animals to the outdoors, shade, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air, clean water for drinking, and direct sunlight, suitable to the species, its stage of life, the climate, and the environment
- ✓ **Continuous total confinement of any animal indoors is prohibited**
- ✓ Appropriate clean, dry bedding (roughages used as bedding which may be consumed by animals must be organically produced and handled)

#### **2) Management of yards, feeding pads, feedlots and lanes**

- ✓ Well-drained
- ✓ Kept in good condition (including frequent removal of wastes)
- ✓ Managed to prevent runoff of wastes and contaminated water to adjoining or nearby surface water and across property boundaries.

Operators must manage pastures and other outdoor access areas in a manner that does not put soil or water quality at risk.

#### **3) Housing conditions**

Shelter should allow for:

- ✓ Natural maintenance, comfort behaviors and opportunity to exercise
- ✓ Temperature, ventilation and air circulation suitable to the species
- ✓ Reduction of potential for livestock injury

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## **B. ADDITIONAL RULES FOR RUMINANTS**

Access to pasture throughout the grazing season, use of yards, feeding pads, and feedlots to provide **ruminants** with access to the outdoors **during the non-grazing season** and supplemental feeding during the grazing season:

- ✓ Yards, feeding pads and feedlots shall be large enough to allow all **ruminant** livestock occupying the space to feed simultaneously without crowding and without competition for feed.
- ✓ **Continuous total confinement of ruminants in yards, feeding pads and feedlots is prohibited**

## **C. TEMPORARY CONFINEMENT OR SHELTER FOR ALL LIVESTOCK**

Animals may be *temporarily* (\*) denied access to the outdoors and be confined under the following **exceptional circumstances**:

- ✓ **Inclement weather** [Weather that is violent, or characterized by temperatures (high or low), or characterized by excessive precipitation that can cause physical harm to a given species of livestock. Production yields or growth rates of livestock lower than the maximum achievable do not qualify as physical harm].
- ✓ **According to the animal's stage of life** [A discrete time period in an animal's life which requires specific management practices different than during other periods (e.g., poultry during feathering)]. Breeding, freshening, lactation and other recurring events are not a stage of life.
- ✓ **Conditions under which the health, safety or well-being of the animal could be jeopardized**
- ✓ **Risk to soil or water quality**
- ✓ **Preventive healthcare procedures or for the treatment of illness or injury**
- ✓ **Sorting or shipping animals and livestock sales** [animals shall be maintained under continuous organic management, including organic feed during the allowed confinement]
- ✓ **Breeding** [bred animals shall not be denied access to the outdoors and, once bred, **ruminants** shall not be denied access to pasture during the grazing season]
- ✓ **Participation in a fair** or other demonstration for youth projects, confinement is possible up to one week prior to the event, through the event and up to 24 hours returning to the holding. During the confinement, animals must be maintained under continuous organic management, notably be organically fed.

(\*) *temporary and temporarily*: occurring for a limited time only (e.g. overnight, throughout a storm, during a period of illness), not permanent or lasting.

## **D. ADDITIONAL TEMPORARY DENIAL OF ACCESS TO PASTURE OR OUTDOORS FOR RUMINANTS**

Ruminants may be *temporarily* denied access to the outdoors and to pasture under the following conditions:

- ✓ **One week at the end of a lactation for dry off** (for denial of access to pasture only), **3 weeks prior to birthing and up to one week after**
- ✓ **In the case of newborn dairy cattle for up to 6 months (afterward they must be on pasture during the grazing season and may no longer be individually housed)**. During the confinement, calves shall not be confined or tethered in a way that prevents them from lying down, standing up and moving about freely
- ✓ **In the case of fiber bearing animals, for short periods for shearing**
- ✓ **In the case of dairy animals, for short periods daily for milking** (sufficient grazing time must be ensured during the period of milking, the minimum 30% of DMI must be met). **Milking frequencies or duration practices cannot be used to deny dairy animals pasture.**

## **E. FINISHING PERIOD FOR RUMINANT SLAUGHTER STOCK**

Ruminant slaughter stock, typically grain finished, must be maintained on pasture for each day of the finishing period falling into the grazing season for the geographical location.

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However, yards, feeding pads or feedlots may be used to provide finish feeding rations and rule exempts ruminant slaughter stock from the 30 percent DMI from grazing requirements.

The finishing period shall not exceed one fifth (1/5) of the animal full life or 120 days, whichever is shorter:

✓ **Slaughter Cattle:** Basically, if the expected slaughter age is  $\geq 20$  months then the finishing period will be a maximum of 120 days;

If the expected slaughter age is  $\leq 20$  months than the finishing period, will be a maximum of 1/5 its lifespan.

✓ **Slaughter sheep:** Typical life span for a slaughter lamb is 5-8 months. The finishing period will be a maximum of 1/5 its lifespan.

## F. MANAGEMENT OF MANURE IN ALL CASES

Operators must **manage manure** in a manner that does not contribute to the contamination of crops, soil or water by plant nutrients, heavy metals or pathogenic organisms and shall **optimize the recycling of nutrients**

## VII. **PASTURE PRACTICE (§ 205.240)**

### A. MANAGEMENT OF PASTURE FOR RUMINANTS

**Pasture must be managed as a crop** (see NOP rules for crop production):

- ✓ Pasture management does not include crop rotation provisions (§205.205) or cultivation practices (e.g. tillage)
- ✓ Annual crops for ruminant grazing must be managed in full compliance with NOP rules for vegetation production (§§205.202—205.206).
- ✓ Irrigation **shall be used**, as needed, to promote pasture growth, when an operation has irrigation available.

**Operators must manage pasture in order to:**

- ✓ Provide daily grazing throughout the grazing season for all ruminants
- ✓ Provide, annually, a sufficient quantity and quality of forage to meet the minimum requirement of 30% of ruminant DMI on average throughout the grazing season
- ✓ Minimize the occurrence and spread of diseases and parasites
- ✓ Refrain from putting soil or water quality at risk

### B. OSP: PASTURE PLAN

A pasture plan must be included in the operator **OSP** and updated annually:

- ✓ Submission of the previous yearly pasture plan is acceptable when no change has occurred in the plan
- ✓ When a change is contemplated that may affect an operation's compliance, the producer must get agreement from their certifier before implementation

**Description of the Pasture Plan:**

- ✓ Types of pasture provided
- ✓ Cultural and management practices to be used to ensure a sufficient and available pasture during the grazing season
- ✓ Grazing season according to the regional location (dates, length)
- ✓ Location and size of pastures (acreage, maps giving pasture's identification)
- ✓ Types of grazing methods
- ✓ Location and types of fences, sources of shade and water
- ✓ Soil fertility and seeding systems
- ✓ Erosion control and protection of natural wetlands and riparian areas

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## VIII. POST-HARVEST HANDLING (§205.270 – §205.272)

Harvest, transport, handling (e.g. slaughtering, eviscerating and cutting) and storage of organic animal products must be done in a manner that avoids commingling with nonorganic products and protects organic products from contact with prohibited substances. Special care must be taken not to use or re-use (without thorough cleaning) packing materials that has been in contact with substances which might compromise the integrity of organic products.

## IX. ALLOWED AND PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES USED IN THE NOP (§205.603 – §205.604)

All materials used on the operation must comply with the standards for agricultural practices summarized above and as detailed on the National List. The List §205.600 to §205.606 are essentially divided into two categories of materials: synthetic and non-synthetic (natural).

Section 205.603 lists **allowed synthetic** materials for use in organic livestock operations, some of these materials have special annotations or restrictions on their use. Other synthetic materials than the ones mentioned here are prohibited.

Section 205.604 is a short list of **prohibited natural** materials for use in organic livestock production. Other natural materials are generally allowed.

**Prior to using any commercial inputs, operators must ensure they are NOP compliant. Detailed information on the input must be provided to ECOCERT ICO in order to demonstrate that all active and non-active ingredients are approved.**

You will find information about the NOP on the USDA-NOP homepage:

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop>

You can check the compliance of many inputs for use under the NOP on the OMRI website

[www.omri.org](http://www.omri.org).

If you need further information, ECOCERT ICO staff are available to answer technical questions.

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