



Guidelines for Organic Certification of Dairy Livestock

The following guidelines are based on the USDA organic regulations (7 CFR §205). In order to be eligible for organic certification, farms must be in compliance with the following standards.

Land requirements (§205.202)

Land used for pasturing and housing livestock and livestock feed and bedding crops must qualify for organic certification. The organic regulations state that any field or farm parcel, from which harvested crops are intended to be sold as organic, must have had no prohibited substances applied to it for a period of three years immediately preceding the harvest of the crop.

Example to determine if a field qualifies:

A farmer's last fertilizer application is on May 31, 2011.

On May 31, 2012 first transitional year has ended.

On May 31, 2013 second transitional has ended.

On May 31, 2014 third transitional year has ended.

This means after May 31, 2014 pastures or crops harvested can be certified organic.

Please refer to the *Guidelines for Organic Certification of Crops* for a complete description of the organic standards for crops.

Origin of Livestock (§205.236)

Farmers may either transition an existing non-organic herd to organic production or purchase an organic herd. The transition is a one-year process, during which the producer must manage the herd following the organic standards.

Accepted

- Dairy animals under continuous organic management from the last third of gestation
- Dairy animals under continuous organic management beginning no later than 1 year prior to the production of milk or milk products to be represented as organic
- Breeder stock brought onto the organic facility and managed organically no later than the last third of gestation

Prohibited

- Representing breeder or dairy stock not under continuous organic management since the last third of gestation as qualifying for organic slaughter
- Continuously transitioning non-organic animals into a distinct herd that has been converted to organic production



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All purchases of organic livestock must be accompanied with organic certificates and receipts that are sufficient to preserve the identity of all organically managed animals.

Livestock Feed (§205.237)

For Transitioning Herds

Beginning the first day of the transition, all animals must receive 100% organic feed. The 100% organic feed ration can include forages from land in your farm production plan that is being managed organically and is 'certifiable' or in the third and final year of transition.

For Purchased Organic Herds

Starting with the day animals arrive on the farm, all animals must receive 100% organic feed. *No transitional crops may be fed to organic animals.* Transitional crops must be harvested separately and sold to a non-organic market. Records of these sales must be kept. Transitional pastures may not be grazed until they qualify for certification.

Accepted

- 100% of feed grains and forage, including pastures, managed by organic production practices and if applicable, organically, handled.
- Feed additives and supplements consistent with the National List §205.603.
- Minerals and vitamins that are FDA approved or currently listed in AAFCO will be considered for approval by your organic certifier.

Prohibited

- Use of animal drugs, including hormones, to promote growth
- Plastic pellets for roughage
- Urea or manure added to feed or in feed formulas.
- Direct fed mammalian or poultry by-products such as animal fats and rendered products (does not include fishmeal).
- Providing feed supplements or additives in amounts over what is needed by the livestock for nutrition and health.

All pastures must be certified organic. If the bedding qualifies as roughage (hay, straw, etc.), it must comply with the feed requirements and be certified organic.

Purchased Feed

All purchased grain and forages must be certified organic. You must keep receipts and accompanying certificates as documentation of off-farm feed purchases. The receipt must verify the quantity and source of feed purchased from off-farm.



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All feed supplements, including minerals and salt blocks must be approved by your certifier. Antibiotics, GMO-derived products, animal by-products and synthetic preservatives are not permitted in any feed products. Be sure that any mineral supplements do not contain prohibited ingredients (such as mineral oil). Agricultural substances in feed supplements (molasses, soy oil, roughage, etc.) must be organic.

Young Stock Management

Calves (or other young ruminant stock) must be fed organic milk and organic feed. The use of conventional milk replacer and medicated grain is prohibited.

Livestock Healthcare Practices (§205.238)

Animal health is the result of preventative and on-going management efforts to create living soils, provide nourishing forage and feeds, and improve the quality of livestock life. Animals must be kept in healthy, low stress environments. Producers must use preventative health care practices and may only use approved treatments.

Accepted

- Selecting species and types of livestock suitable to the conditions on their farm and resistant to prevalent diseases and parasites.
- Providing feed sufficient to meet the needs of the animals, including vitamins, minerals, protein and/or amino acids, fatty acids, energy sources, and fiber.
- Establishing appropriate housing, pasture, and sanitation to reduce diseases and parasites.
- Providing animals with the opportunity for exercise, freedom of movement, and reduction of stress.
- Performing physical alterations when needed for the animal's welfare, taking care to minimize pain and stress.
- Administering vaccines and other veterinary biologics.

When preventative measures are insufficient to prevent sickness, producers may consult with their certifier for allowed medications.

Prohibited

- Withholding treatment from animals to maintain organic status.
- Administering any animal drug in the absence of illness.
- Use of hormones for the promotion of growth of livestock.
- Selling, labeling, or representing as organic any animal or animal product that has been treated with antibiotics, a synthetic substance not on the National List, or any prohibited non-synthetic substance.
- Tail docking.

Use of Antibiotics

In an emergency, a producer must use antibiotics if necessary to save the life of the animal or to prevent suffering. Use of antibiotics should be based on the recommendation of a vet. Withholding treatment of



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antibiotics from animals to maintain their organic status is prohibited. If a producer uses antibiotics, they must do the following:

- Record the event in their health records.
- Notify their certifier of the situation.
- Segregate the animal to prevent contamination of organic products. For example, a dairy cow must be marked to prevent the milk from going in the bulk tank. In addition, the milk may not be fed to calves.
- Sell the animal to a non-organic market.
- Document the sale of the animal.

For the offspring of the treated animal to qualify as organic, the treatment must not occur during the last third of gestation. In addition, the offspring cannot nurse on an animal that has been treated.

Oxytocin Use

Oxytocin is a hormone that is allowed with restrictions. It is prohibited for routine or long-term use. It may only be used when necessary in post-parturition therapies.

Parasiticide Use

Livestock producers are encouraged to minimize parasite infestations by quarantine and fecal exams for all incoming stock, good pasture management, maintaining clean facilities and culling seriously infected animals. Producers must have a parasite management plan for preventing infestations. In addition, biological control methods and non-synthetic controls are permitted.

Use of parasiticides (de-wormers) is allowed only in health care emergencies and in the case of acute and dangerously high levels of infestation. Parasiticides are allowed when preventative practices and veterinary biologics are inadequate to prevent sickness. There is a 90-day withholding period for lactating dairy cows treated with parasiticides.

Currently the only synthetic parasiticides allowed for use are Ivermectin, Moxidectin & Fenbendazole. *Synthetic parasiticides may not be used on animals intended to be sold as organic meat.* If a producer uses an allowed parasiticide, they must do the following:

- Record the event in their health records including withholding time, if applicable.
- Notify their certifier of the situation.
- Segregate the animal to prevent contamination of organic products. For example, a dairy cow must be marked to prevent the milk from going in the bulk tank. In addition, milk may not be fed to calves.
- If applicable document sale to non-organic meat market.

Breeding

Accepted

Natural service

Artificial insemination



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Prohibited

Use of breeding hormones

Livestock Living Conditions (§205.239)

Livestock housing must provide for adequate ventilation, adequate supply of clean water and proper sanitation. Housing must provide access to the outdoors, shade, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air and direct sunlight year round. Living conditions must accommodate the health and natural behavior of animals. Continuous total confinement of any ruminant animal over 6 months of age indoors is prohibited.

Accepted

- Temporary confinement for an animal because of inclement weather; the animal's stage of production (except that lactation is not a stage of life); conditions under which the health and safety of the animal could be jeopardized; risk to soil or water quality; preventative healthcare procedures or the treatment of illness or injury; breeding; and 4-H or other youth projects.
- Longer confinement of an animal for one week for dry off, three weeks prior to parturition, and one week after parturition.
- Newborn dairy cattle may be confined until 6 months of age.
- Animals may be confined for periods of milking, providing that milking is scheduled in a manner to ensure sufficient grazing time to provide an animal with an average of at least 30% DMI from pasture.

Prohibited

- Animals confined or tethered in such a way that prevents them from lying down, standing up, fully extending its limbs and moving about freely.
- Inadequate clean, dry bedding. If the bedding qualifies as roughage (hay, straw, etc.), it must comply with the feed requirements and be certified organic.
- Continuous total indoor confinement of any ruminant animal over 6 months of age.
- Continuous total confinement of ruminants in yards, feeding pads and feedlots is prohibited.
- Yards, feeding pads and feedlots that are not large enough to allow all ruminant livestock occupying the area to feed simultaneously without crowding and without competition for food.

Manure must be managed in a manner that does not contribute to contamination of crops, soil or water, by plant nutrients, heavy metals, or pathogenic organisms and optimizes the recycling of nutrients.

Lumber treated with arsenate or other prohibited substances may not be used for new construction that will come into direct contact with soil or livestock. For example, treated wood should not be used to construct feeding or housing areas where livestock can have direct contact with the wood.

Pasture (§205.240)

All ruminant livestock must be provided pasture throughout the entire grazing season for the geographical region, which shall be not less than 120 days per calendar year. Pasture should be provided to provide a



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minimum of 30% of a ruminant's dry matter intake (DMI) on average over the course of the grazing season.

Accepted

- Temporary confinement from pasture due to weather, season, and/or climate. The total grazing days for ruminants (over 6 months of age) must still not be less than 120 days per calendar year.
- Breeding bulls are exempt from the 30 percent dry matter intake from grazing requirement; provided, that, any animal maintained under this exemption is not sold, labeled, used, or represented as organic slaughter stock.

Prohibited

- Providing over 70% of a ruminant's dry matter demand from dry matter fed (ie. stored forages, grains) during the grazing season. This shall be calculated as an average over the entire grazing season for each type and class of animal.
- Providing pasture of insufficient quality and or quantity to graze throughout the entire grazing season.
- Not managing pasture in compliance with the guidelines for organic crop production.

Pasture Plan

The producer will complete a pasture plan as part of their annual certification application. The plan will demonstrate, through auditable records, the following:

- Types of pasture provided
- Cultural and management practices in place to ensure sufficient quality and quantity of pasture
- Duration of the grazing season
- Location and size of pastures (including maps that identify each pasture)
- Types of grazing methods to be used in the pasture system
- Location and types of permanent fences
- Location and source of shade and water
- Soil fertility and seeding systems
- Erosion control and protection of natural wetlands and riparian areas practices

Slaughter (§205.102)

Meat that is to be sold, labeled, or represented as organic must be from an animal that was under continuous organic management from at least the last third of gestation. A certified organic slaughter facility must be used for processing meat that is to be marketed as organic.

Marketing and Labeling (§205.303)

Livestock products that are packaged and to be sold, labeled or represented as "100% organic" or "organic" must include the following on the information panel of your label:

- Handler information: name of handler and business address
- Followed by "Certified organic by ***", identifying the name of the certifying agent responsible for certifying the handler of the finished product.



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Additionally, the agricultural products in packages that are to be sold, labeled or represented as “100% organic” or “organic” may display on the package panel or any marketing/labeling information about the product the following:

- The term “100% organic” or “organic, as applicable to modify the name of the product
- The USDA seal and/or your certifier’s logo/seal

For more details of USDA label requirements, it is recommended that you contact your certifier. Most certifiers require label review and approval prior to the use of the label in the sale of agricultural products to be sold or represented as organic.

Record Keeping (§205.103)

Records must be kept on an ongoing basis. Records are essential, as organic certification is about verifying your farming practices to a third party. Maintaining records can also help producers improve their management. Records must be “readily auditable” (accessible, organized, complete) and must be maintained for five years. In general, your record keeping system must allow a third party to trace your management from birth/purchase to death/sales. Many certifiers provide record keeping templates but also accept farm-specific systems, so long as they include the necessary information.

Records that must be kept by certified livestock producers include:

- Health care records for all medications and treatments administered
- Health care product inventory
- Animal inventory record that tracks animals entering and leaving the farm
- Receipts for purchases and sales of livestock, livestock feed, bedding (if applicable)
- Applicable service provider records (vet slips, custom harvester, etc.)
- Feed rations for all animal groups
- Sales/Production records for products sold off the farm
- Pasture plan (as outlined above)

Split Operations (§205.272)

Operations that choose to produce organic and non-organic livestock products or to hire services from custom operators that may service non-organic and organic clients, must implement measures necessary to prevent the commingling of organic and non-organic livestock products. Additionally, they must protect the organic livestock and livestock products from contact with prohibited substances.

Please refer to your certifier’s guidelines for a more detailed explanation of the USDA organic regulations. If you have any question regarding the standards or the application process, please contact your certifier.



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