

**National Organic Standards Board
Livestock Committee
Proposed Discussion Document
March 28, 2012**

Introduction

Animal welfare is a basic principle of organic production. As the number of farmers in the United States decline, consumer concerns for farm animal care have increased. There are numerous animal welfare organizations and methods to verify animal welfare. The Livestock Committee wishes to provide guidance that will assist producers and certifiers to improve and assess welfare on farm and assure consumers that animals are well cared for and that the organic community is leading with a focus on continuous improvement.

Background

The United States Congress anticipated the need to elaborate livestock standards in 1990 when the Organic Foods Production Act was passed. The Humane Society of the United States played a central role in advocating for the passage of OFPA. It was understood at that time that animal welfare standards would eventually be developed. Several animal health and welfare practices were described in the Preamble accompanying the NOP Final Rule. An organic livestock farmer must conform to the following list according to the Description of Regulations:

- select species and types of livestock with regard to suitability for site-specific conditions and resistance to prevalent diseases and parasites
- provide a feed ration including vitamins, minerals, protein, and/or amino acids, energy sources, and, for ruminants, fiber.
- establish appropriate housing, pasture conditions and sanitation practices to minimize the occurrence and spread of diseases and parasites.
- maintain animals under conditions which provide for exercise, freedom of movement, and reduction of stress appropriate to the species.
- conduct all physical alterations to promote the animals' welfare and in a manner that minimizes stress and pain.
- establish and maintain livestock living conditions which accommodate the health and natural behavior of the livestock.
- provide access to the outdoors, shade, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air, and direct sunlight suitable to the species, its stage of production, the climate, and the environment.
- provide shelter designed to allow for the natural maintenance, comfort level, and opportunity to exercise appropriate to the species

The NOSB was further tasked in the Preamble with creating species specific guidelines. These were to include specifics on temporary confinement, space requirements, and management guidance. The current Livestock Committee has worked with Temple Grandin, the Livestock Issues Working Group, and other individuals with specific areas of expertise toward completing this task. The Livestock Committee feels that outcome based standards best measure the health and well-being of livestock and will continue to work on those documents. The guidance documents are intended to help the program, certifiers and producers to understand and meet the regulations. These documents were written to enhance the regulations, clarify the expectation for animal welfare on organic farms and minimize the need for increased regulations.

Proposed Materials

The Livestock Committee intends to develop species specific guidance for all species. To date, the Livestock Committee has worked with members of the organic community, certifiers, animal welfare specialists, and previous NOSB members to develop the following four species specific guidance pieces.

Guidance for Assessing Animal Welfare on Organic Bison

Guidance for Assessing Animal Welfare on Organic Poultry Operations

Guidance for Assessing Animal Welfare on Organic Sheep Operations

Committee Vote

Motion: Wendy Fulwider Second: Colehour Bondera

Yes: 8 No: 0 Absent: 0 Abstain: 0 Recuse: 0