

**National Organic Standards Board
Livestock Committee
Proposed Recommendation
Species-Specific Animal Welfare Scorecards**

October 14, 2011

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 believes that outcome based scores are the best measure of farm animal welfare.

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 that organic livestock farmers must adhere to.

Discussion

The Livestock Committee feels that outcome based standards are the best measure for assessing the health and well-being of livestock. The four major concerns for dairy cattle are:

- Body condition
- Locomotion
- Cleanliness
- Injury and lesions

These measures are currently in use and have been well documented as welfare indicators in the livestock industry. Body condition is affected by stage of lactation and diet. Cows generally score less than 2 only if they are ill. Locomotion score may be 2 or greater if there is an injury. When cattle have a clean, dry place to lie down the majority of the herd will be clean. Grazing cattle generally have safe and spacious environments which minimize injuries and lesions. The Livestock Committee will discuss what is considered normal and acceptable for each of these measures in the future. Other welfare measures on the tally sheet include:

- Cattle affected with mange or lice
- Cattle with broken tails
- Ammonia concentration in buildings

- Other items that may need attention

Cattle may be affected with mange and lice during the winter months. This is an uncomfortable condition and requires immediate treatment. Broken tails are uncommon and are generally the result of an accident. High numbers indicate a problem with animal handling or the farm environment. Ammonia smell in buildings may indicate a lack of ventilation.

The photographs and descriptions on the dairy score card clearly show the difference between scores and have a corresponding spot on the tally sheet. The shaded boxes on the tally sheet represent areas of concern. Inspectors should view all of the cows and young stock but tally only the animals that would score in a shaded box. This identifies any issues that may need to be addressed and minimizes the amount of additional inspection time.

Committee Recommendations

- I. Dairy Auditor Tally Sheet**
- II. Dairy Scorecard**

Committee Vote

Motion: Wendy Fulwider Second: Mac Stone
Yes: 6 No: 0 Absent:1 Abstain: 0 Recuse: 0

Dairy Auditor Score Sheet

Date Producer Number of milk cows: Dry cows:	Bred heifers: 6-12 months 0-6 months
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Overview of livestock health and conditions:

Extremely thin 1	Frame obvious 2	Body condition 3 Good fat cover	Well covered 4	Obese 5
Very clean 1	Hygiene 2 Manure stains	Wet or dry manure 3 On legs udder	Extremely dirty 4	
Normal 1	Locomotion 2 Slightly affected	Cannot keep up with herd 3	Limping 4	Can't bear weight 5
Hock condition 1 May have hair loss			Swelling 2	
Number of cows missing patches of hair due to mange or lice	Number of cows with broken tails	Ammonia odor present		

Housing type: Milking herd _____ Dry cows _____
 Heifers _____ Calves _____

Three items done well at this farm:

Three items that may need attention at this farm:

Tally the number of cows that score in the appropriate shaded box.

Locomotion Scoring



Score 1 Normal Stands and walks normally. Her back is level. She makes long confident strides.



Score 2 Slightly affected - Stands with flat back and arches when she walks. Gait is slightly off.



Score 3 Cannot keep up with the grazing herd. Stands and walks with an arched back. Makes short strides and favors one or more legs.



Score 4 Lame - Arched back standing and walking. Favoring one or more limbs but can bear some weight on affected limb(s).



Score 5 Severely Lame - Pronounced arching of the back. Reluctant to move, with almost complete weight transfer off the affected limb.

Body Condition Scoring



Score 1 Extremely thin



Score 2 Frame obvious



Score 3 Frame and covering well balanced



Score 4 Frame not as visible as covering



Score 5 Obese

Hock Lesions



Score 1 No damage or may have patches of hair loss on the hock

Score 2 Swellings at the hock may be extensive, bleeding, or draining

Cow Cleanliness



Score 1 No manure stains or dried manure attached to cow.

Score 2 Manure stains but no dried manure attached to cow.

Score 3 Dried or wet manure on legs or udder.

Score 4 Cows with wet or dried manure on legs, udder, and ventral abdomen.