



Notice to Accredited Certifying Agents

To: Accredited Certifying Agents

From: Miles McEvoy
Deputy Administrator
National Organic Program

Subject: Implementation of the Access to Pasture Rule

Date: October 4, 2010

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Miles McEvoy", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

The new access to pasture rule became effective on June 17, 2010. To assist operations during this implementation period, certifying agents should conduct a full assessment of ruminant operations to determine their compliance with the pasture rule during the 2010 grazing season. Certifying agents should complete the assessments and provide written feedback to the organic operations concerning their compliance, including whether operations have adequate records and adequate forage from pasture to meet the new pasture requirements. Certifying agents should also inform operations concerning any areas where the operation is not in compliance with the new pasture requirements.

During this implementation period, certifying agents should not issue noncompliance notices related to the new pasture requirements to operations that were certified prior to February 17, 2010. However, certifying agents should notify these operations of any practices (e.g. dry matter amounts from pasture, recordkeeping) that they need to change in order for them to come into compliance by June 17, 2011.

After June 17, 2011, certifying agents must issue Notices of Noncompliance or other adverse actions for violations related to the new pasture requirements that are identified during the certification process.

The National Organic Program (NOP) is interested in hearing from certifying agents concerning the implementation of the new requirements. Specifically, the NOP would like information about challenges that organic ruminant operations are facing as they implement the new standards. Please send in any relevant information concerning the implementation of the pasture rule to Mark Keating at mark.keating@ams.usda.gov Thank you.