

## NOSB Recommendations

---

**Draft Recommendation  
Access to the Outdoors for Poultry  
NOSB Livestock Committee  
December 21, 2001**

The NOSB Livestock Committee submits this proposed wording as a clarification for poultry for the access to the outdoor requirement in the Final Rule (Section 205.239(a)(1)). The following addresses what we see as the intent and benefits of the access to the outdoor requirement and includes a recommended standard.

### **Intent:**

The intent of requiring access to the outdoors is to ensure that the organic poultry farm plan provides for living conditions that allow and encourage poultry to be able to go outside of buildings to satisfy their natural behavior patterns, provide adequate exercise area, provide preventive health care benefits and answer consumer expectations of organic livestock management. The intent is to incorporate the management plan for outdoor access as a required part of the livestock organic system plan.

Access to the outdoors fulfills an integral role in health care and living condition requirements in organic poultry production. Access to the outdoors represents the complex task of applying the organic principles to an organic poultry operation. The organic livestock plan will be different for each farm in fulfilling this standard and will take into consideration the difference in geographic regions, seasonal weather, farm layout, species and breeds.

Access to the outdoors contributes to preventive health care management by enabling poultry to develop and reproduce under natural conditions that can reduce stress, strengthen immunity, and deter illness. Access to the outdoors affords poultry the freedom of choice to satisfy natural behavior patterns such as availability to the soil, direct sunlight and increased exercise area.

### **Benefits:**

Access to the outdoors provides many potential benefits to an organic poultry farm, including:

**Poultry health** – Common benefits associated with access to outdoors are related to increased exercise with potential improved feet and leg strength, ability to perform natural behavior patterns and increased ventilation. Access to outdoors means exposure to direct sunlight. There are concerns with increased disease exposure for poultry but many organic poultry producers feel this is not the case and in fact feel there are health benefits.

**Consumer expectation** – Public comment from the two proposed rules on national organic standards shows a clear expectation that consumers have for access to outdoors as part of humane management for organically raised livestock.

### **Recommended standard:**

Access to outdoors for poultry

1. Organically managed poultry must have access to outdoors during the months of the year when feasible. The producers's organic system plan must illustrate how the producer will maximize and encourage access to the outdoors.
2. The producer of an organically managed poultry may, when justified in the organic system plan, provide temporary confinement because of:
  - a. Inclement weather;
  - b. The stage of production, up to 5 weeks of age;
  - c. Conditions under which the health, safety, or well-being of the poultry could be jeopardized;
  - d. Risk to soil or water quality.

### **Implementation issues:**

The organic livestock farm plan must incorporate site-specific conditions, the uniqueness of each species, overall feed plan, environmental concerns, health concerns and other issues into the plan to satisfy the access to outdoors requirement. Site-specific conditions in organic poultry management include the area and make up of land available for access to outdoors and environmental concerns. This requirement means clearly that livestock must have the ability to choose to be in the housing or outside in the open air and direct sunshine. There must be the ability to go outside and this standard can not be satisfied by bringing the outdoors inside a building (sunlight through screens/windows, air transfer etc). The recommended standard provides several temporary exceptions to provide flexibility for the well being of the livestock and the environment. It is understood that in some cases short lived poultry such as broilers may spend their entire life inside due to inclement weather and concern for livestock well being.

The requirement for access to outdoors is not based on the nutritional needs of poultry but rather on humane consideration and consumer perception. Providing nutrition from land as part of access to outdoors is an appropriate option as part of applying organic principles to the organic livestock plan but is not required.

Environmental concerns are a major part of the organic livestock plan in satisfying this standard. Site-specific conditions and land use regulations will determine the land available to livestock and whether the land available is bare soil, lightly vegetated, or pasture. Livestock living conditions are a major factor in the organic livestock plan and would require that the 'outdoors' offered must satisfy these requirements.

The Livestock Committee recommends that organic poultry production should satisfy the principles of organic agriculture adopted by the NOSB in October 2001. Organic poultry producers must document all applicable practices in the organic system plan. The organic system plan must demonstrate how access to the outdoors in an organic poultry operation enhances the well being of the livestock and the land on which they depend.