

Date

4-27-02

National Organic Standards Board
c/o Katherine Benham
Room 4008-South Building
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington DC 20250-0001

National Organic Standards Board,

I am writing to express my support for outdoor access in organic poultry production. As a consumer of organic products, I fully expect that all poultry are allowed access to fresh air, sunlight and green forage, weather permitting. Just as ruminant animals like cattle should be allowed access to pasture, poultry need to exhibit their natural behavior and forage and scratch outdoors. Here are some good reasons to make outdoor access mandatory:

- Allows the birds to exhibit natural behaviors.
- Reduces cannibalism and feather picking.
- Consumption of fresh grass can increase CLA (Conjugated Linoleic Acid) and Omega-3 levels in both eggs and meat.
- Eating fresh grass can increase Vitamin A/Beta Carotene levels in eggs.
- Sets the humane treatment standard that consumers expect.

Eliminating outdoor access for organic poultry, or weakening the standard to the point it is meaningless, seems to be largely an effort by the conventional industry to enter organic production without changing their management style. Raising poultry without outdoor access may be easier, but it is not in the best interest of either the birds or the consumer who buys organic poultry products.

Organic farmers have been successfully raising poultry with outdoor access for many years. Please consider the success and experience of these established organic farmers. At a time when acceptance and respect are necessary, the removal of a long-established standard of organic production would be a great blow to the credibility of the new USDA National Organic Standards.

Please keep the outdoor access standard for poultry in the National Organic Standards.

Respectfully submitted,

Name:

Shannon Dillon

Address:

185 High St
Medford MA 02155



ACTION ALERT!

Help us protect the outdoor access standard for organic poultry.

Please help us keep the outdoor access standard for poultry in the National Organic Standards. Please write a letter to the National Organic Standards Board for their consideration or use the one we have supplied for you. We have to act fast; please mail your letters as soon as possible. Here are the details:

It has recently come to our attention that forces have mobilized to eliminate the outdoor access standard for poultry in the new National Organic Standards. They are using the rather weak argument of potential parasites/disease from wild animals as their reason for eliminating outdoor access for organic poultry.

Eliminating outdoor access for organic poultry, or weakening the standard to the point it is meaningless, seems to be largely an effort by the conventional industry to enter organic production without changing their management style. Raising poultry without outdoor access may be easier, but it is not in the best interest of either the birds or the consumer who buys organic poultry products. This mindset completely misses the central philosophy of organic agriculture: that farming should incorporate natural processes.

Outdoor access for poultry has several important benefits:

- Allows the birds to exhibit natural behaviors.
- Reduces cannibalism and feather picking.
- Stimulates and strengthens the birds' immune systems.
- Eating fresh grass can increase Conjugated Linoleic Acid and Omega-3 levels in eggs and meat.
- Eating fresh grass can increase Vitamin A/Beta Carotene levels in eggs.
- Sets a strong humane treatment standard.

The Organic Valley Poultry Pool currently consists of 42 farmers 20 of which are Amish producers. The pool is responsible for 135,000 layers, 65,000 broilers, and 15,000 turkeys. In ten years of organic production, Organic Valley farmers have never had an outbreak of disease or parasites due to outdoor access. This is the reality of organic poultry production.

At a time when acceptance and respect are necessary, the removal of a long-established standard of organic production would be a great blow to the credibility of the new USDA National Organic Standards. Losing this fight would also have serious implications for family farmers. The final recommendation should be based on carefully managed systems that consider the needs of the animals as well as the farmers' bottom line. Family farmers will simply not be able to compete with big poultry conglomerates if the organic standards are watered down.

Address all responses to:

**National Organic Standards Board
c/o Katherine Benham
Room 4008-South Building
1400 Independence Ave., SW
Washington DC 20250-0001
Email: NOSB.Livestock@usda.gov**

*Mae Ullmann
284 Boston Ave #2
Medford, Ma
02155*

Thank you for your support,

The Organic Farmers of Organic Valley Family of Farms

For More Information: 1-888-444-6455

www.organicvalley.com