

**National Organic Standards Board
Livestock Committee
Proposed Guidance Recommendation
Animal Welfare and Stocking Rates**

October 14, 2011

Introduction

Animal welfare is a fundamental principle of organic production, and consumers expect that organic certification ensures humanely treated animals allowed to fulfill natural behaviors. The Livestock Committee of the NOSB considers that a focus on animal welfare warrants appropriate and effective regulation and guidance. It is important to consider the social and ethical implications as well as scientific research with regard to animal welfare. This proposal is intended to refine—not replace—the November 2009 NOSB Animal Welfare Recommendation. The combination of the 2009 and this guidance recommendation aim to more clearly identify the parameters that define animal welfare on certified organic operations. As requested by the National Organic Program, it is our intention to create a comprehensive animal welfare program that benefits both livestock and farmers. Except for the specific sections whose proposed changes or addition is detailed in this recommendation, the November 2009 recommendation is still current. This recommendation details the specific measures which the committee feels the program should include in guidance issued to the certifiers and the organic community. We have also made a separate recommendation regarding the measures that should be implemented via changes to the regulation.

Background

At the May 2009 NOSB meeting, the Livestock Committee presented a Discussion Document on Animal Health and Living Conditions. This document proposed that numerical scoring be used to assess body condition, lameness, coat/feather conditions and cleanliness. Please note that, as described in the discussion section, these assessment measures will be outlined in species-specific Guidance Documents that will be presented at the fall 2011 NOSB meeting.

At the November 2009 NOSB meeting, the NOSB approved an Animal Welfare recommendation that proposed changes to §205.238 Livestock health care practice standard and §205.239 Livestock living conditions (including the separation into mammalian and avian sections) to give more detail to requirements to ensure animal welfare. This 2009 recommendation also noted the need for the establishment of indoor and outdoor space provision minimums.

At the fall 2010 NOSB meeting, the Livestock Committee presented Discussion Documents on Stocking Density and Handling, Transport and Slaughter, receiving public comment on both documents. This recommendation aims to refine the 2009 recommendation and consolidate it with the Livestock Committee's current

recommendations on stocking density and humane handling, transport and slaughter. In completing the current proposal, the Livestock Committee considered public comment and existing animal welfare standards, reviewed studies presented on animal welfare, and considered existing legislation from other countries.

Relevant Areas in the Rule

The areas of the Rule currently addressing animal welfare include **205.2. Terms defined**, **§205.237 Livestock feed**, **§205.238 Livestock health care practice standard**, **§205.239 Livestock living conditions**, and **§205.240 Pasture practice standard**. This recommendation includes and builds upon changes recommended by the NOSB in November of 2009.

Recommended for guidance.

Livestock living conditions

Indoor stocking density. The stocking density table lists livestock by species and weight. All livestock must be provided with bedding as needed to maintain comfort and cleanliness per outcome based standards whether they are housed with or without a roof. The indoor bedded space allowance provided in this recommendation is to be considered a minimum for housed animals during temporary confinement. (205.239(b).

All animals must be able to lie down in a clean, dry place at the same time without lying on top of one another at all times. The less space provided per animal, the more labor-intensive it may be to keep them clean and in good health. Bedding keeps animals warm, clean, and dry and also protects animals from developing lesions due to abrasion on rough surfaces. Animals must be managed in a manner that lameness does not become a common or routine occurrence. If routine hoof trimming due to lameness or overgrown hooves is required, diet or management adjustments will be necessary.

Bison. Bison are not domesticated animals and therefore indoor bedded space would be an added stressor. Bison should not be confined indoors except for medical treatment.

Dairy calf housing. When considering shelter design, it should be taken into account that calves are social animals and should ideally be housed in small groups. Calves may be housed in individual pens or hutches providing that they have enough room to turn around, lie down, stretch out while lying down, get up, rest, and groom themselves; individual calf pens shall be designed and located so that each calf can see, smell, and hear other calves present on the farm.

Calves are tied on some farms while being wintered in the dairy barn or tethered to a hutch. Tethering is less desirable than group housing but may be necessary in some systems to prevent cross-sucking. Tethering is acceptable if calves are safe and meet the requirements that will be laid out in the outcome based standards and movement is not restricted.

Dairy cow housing. Standard tie-stall and free-stall operations that have individual stalls are not included in the stocking density table. Individual stall barns must be managed to keep cows comfortable and to meet the outcome based standards that are in development. These standards will include cleanliness, body condition, injuries and lesions, lameness, etc., as relevant to dairy. This means large stalls are necessary for Holsteins and Brown Swiss, while smaller stalls are indicated for smaller breeds such as Jerseys. Copious amounts of bedding such as chopped straw increase comfort and may contribute to cleaner animals, and prevent injuries and lesions.

Broken tails.

The great majority of farms do not have livestock with broken tails. Accidents do happen and occasionally tail injuries occur. Dairy cattle may be more prone to this injury. An incidence greater than 3% may indicate a problem with housing or handling. This as well as any other issue will be addressed in the Organic System Plan.

Swine. Swine farms will establish and maintain living conditions that accommodate the health and natural behavior of all pigs. The space requirement for pigs must allow every pig to lie down, stand up, turn around freely, run, root, explore, and express other normal patterns of natural behavior. The outdoor living conditions should provide shade, shelter, rotational pastures or paddocks and portable structures as needed.

Buildings and housing structures for pigs must be designed to allow outdoor access for all when seasonally appropriate. The outdoor environment must be managed to minimize soil erosion and overgrazing. Vegetation cover provides grazing, prevention of soil erosion, and promotes soil health. This approach allows for re-growth of vegetation after moving pigs.

All pigs must have access to fresh water and a high-quality feed according to their needs. Farrow crates, flat decks, cages, tail docking, and routine trimming or clipping of teeth are prohibited. Castration should be performed before the piglets reach 2 weeks of age and by trained personnel. Indoor space for pigs must be designed to allow outdoor access on the ground. Pigs should be weaned at 7 to 8 weeks of age. The farm plan must show how the time pigs are outdoors will be maximized. All pigs aged 6 weeks and older must have access to the outdoors. Temporary confinement is only permitted as outlined in OFPA Rule.

Poultry houses. In considering shelter for avian species, dry litter must be provided and maintained. Special considerations for the areas beneath the waterers may be needed to maintain dry litter. Complete clean out of a poultry house is necessary when there have been adverse health issues with the previous flock; otherwise a clean layer of bedding should be provided between flocks to provide a sanitary environment for the new flock coming in.

Poultry houses and outdoor areas must be managed in a manner that allows birds to perform natural behaviors which minimize stress and aggressive acts. Producers should be encouraged to provide environmental enrichments in the house that will relieve

boredom and discourage aggressive acts such as pecking behaviors. It is the intent of the livestock committee that outdoor areas provide birds with access to the soil. If birds do not utilize outdoor areas it may be necessary to make these areas more attractive with environmental enrichments or larger doorways for the birds. This should be incorporated into the organic farm plan.

Outdoor stocking density. Outdoor access is important for all livestock to enhance muscle tone and relieve boredom. Outdoor runs for cattle are to be considered a minimum during the non-grazing season when weather allows animals to leave the indoor bedded area. Cattle pastured during the non-grazing season may not require an indoor bedded area. Since piglets and chicks must be protected from freezing weather, outdoor runs are not necessary. Calves, lambs, kids, and other young animals require protection from extreme weather conditions and threat from predators.

Minimum space requirements charts. The following chart is meant to address periods of temporary confinement or during the non-grazing season for mammalian species. Tie- and free-stall barns are exempt from the space requirements in this chart and must provide one stall for every animal with access to the building. The values in this chart are MINIMUM amounts only and provision of larger areas of enriched environment appropriate to the species is strongly encouraged. Outcome-based requirements (to be developed) will be an integral part of the animal welfare standard.

Mammalian Minimum Space Requirements Charts

Livestock	Indoor Floor Space	Outdoor Runs and Pens
Bison weight (pounds)	Square feet / animal	Square feet /animal
Up to 220	NA	70.0
220-440	NA	120.0
440-770	NA	190.0
Over 770	NA	400 .0
Beef cattle weight (pounds)	Square feet / animal	Square feet /animal
Up to 220	15.0	10.0
220-440	25.0	20.0
440-770	40.0	30.0

770-1100	50.0	40.0
over 1100	10.0 per 220 pounds	8.0 per 220 pounds

Dairy cattle weight (pounds)	Square feet / animal	Square feet /animal
Up to 220	15.0	10.0
220-440	25.0	20.0
440-770	40.0	30.0
770-1100	50.0	40.0
over 1100	10.0 per 220 pounds	8.0 per 220 pounds

Mammalian Minimum Space Requirements Charts (continued)

Livestock	Indoor Floor Space	Outdoor space
Swine	Square feet / animal	Square feet / animal
Sow and piglets	48.0	40.0
Sows	30.0	30.0
Boars	64.0	85.0
Growing pigs	Square feet / animal	Square feet /animal
Up to 24	2.0	Sufficient space for animals to all lie down and apart from one another simultaneously
24—47	3.0	
47—109	6.0	
109—157	9.0	
157—225	13.0	
225 and up	16.0	

Livestock	Indoor Floor Space	Outdoor Space
Sheep and goats (pounds)	Square feet / animal	Square feet / animal
Sheep and Goats	16.0	30.0
Nursing lamb or kid	4.0	8.0
Rabbits	Square feet / animal	Square feet /animal
Adult rabbits	3.0	20.0
Pregnant does	5.0	20.0
Doe and litter	8.0	20.0
Young rabbits 5-12 weeks	1.0	N/A

Committee Vote

Motion: Wendy Fulwider Second: Mac Stone
 Yes: 4 No: 2 Absent: 1 Abstain: 0 Recuse: 0