

**National Organic Standards Board  
Livestock Committee  
Proposed Discussion Document  
March 28, 2012**

## **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.

### **Proposed Materials**

- I. Dairy auditor tally sheet**
- II. Dairy Scorecard**

### **Committee Vote**

Motion: Wendy Fulwider      Second: Colehour Bondera

Yes: 8      No: 0      Absent: 0      Abstain: 0      Recuse: 0