

LABELING ORGANIC MALT BEVERAGES



All organic alcohol beverages must meet both Alcohol and Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) and USDA organic regulations. TTB requires that alcohol beverage labels be reviewed through the Certificate of Label Approval (COLA) application process. Learn more at <https://www.ttbonline.gov/colasonline>.

Organic-specific labeling requirements will be described in the subsequent pages.

Required Elements of a Malt Beverage Label

- 1

Brand name
- 2

Class/type (lager, ale, porter, stout, etc.)
- 3

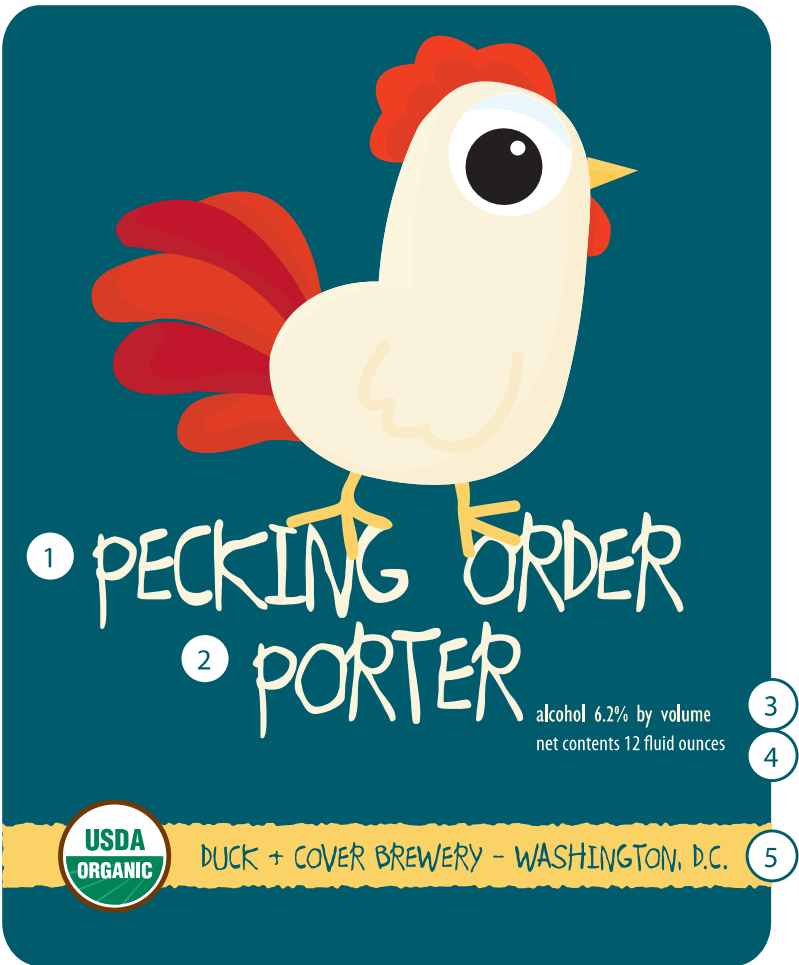
Alcohol content (if required)
- 4

Net contents
- 5

Name and address statement
- 6

Health warning statement

For specific requirements related to each of these elements, other requirements, and information on labeling imported products, visit www.ttb.gov.



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Requirements for malt beverages making organic claims. In addition to TTB requirements, the USDA organic regulations describe the specific production and handling requirements for the three main categories of organic labeling claims. For each category (described on subsequent pages), these regulations dictate the malt beverage’s composition, as well as how and when malt beverage labels may make organic claims.

Organic oversight. The USDA authorizes third-party accredited certifying agents (ACAs) to assess organic operations’ compliance with the USDA organic regulations. The table below outlines some of the key requirements for each labeling category (learn more at www.ams.usda.gov/nop):

	“Organic”	“Made with Organic ***”	Other
Overseen by certifier/ACA?	Yes	Yes	No*
USDA organic seal or foreign equivalent allowed?	Yes	No	No
Organic claims allowed in addition to ingredient statement?	Yes	Yes	No
Added sulfites allowed?	No	No	Yes
Non-organic hops allowed?	No	Yes	Yes
All agricultural ingredients required to be certified organic?	Yes, unless specifically allowed per National List	No, but product must be at least 70% organic	No
Ingredients produced using prohibited methods (e.g., genetic engineering) allowed?	No	No	Yes

*For malt beverages not in the “organic” or “made with organic ***” labeling categories ONLY: COLA application must include organic certificates (“crop reports”) for any specific ingredients identified as “organic” on the label.

Certifier/ACA + COLA review. To ensure compliance with both TTB and USDA organic regulations, a certified operation’s alcohol labels must be approved through the following steps prior to sale of the organic alcohol product:

1. Certifier/ACA reviews the alcohol label(s) to assess compliance with USDA organic regulations.
2. Certifier/ACA stamps/signs label(s), verifying compliance with USDA organic regulations.
3. TTB permittee (importer or organic operation) completes the COLA application.
4. TTB permittee submits COLA application and label(s) approved by the certifier/ACA to TTB.
No longer requires a copy of the organic certificate. <http://bit.ly/ttb-documentation>

Trade considerations. USDA has trade partnerships with multiple countries. These partnerships allow organic products certified in one country to be sold as organic in the other. Regardless of country of origin, traded products must meet the labeling requirements in the destination country and any other terms of the arrangement. Therefore, a malt beverage produced and sold in a foreign country typically has a separate label if it is also imported to the United States.

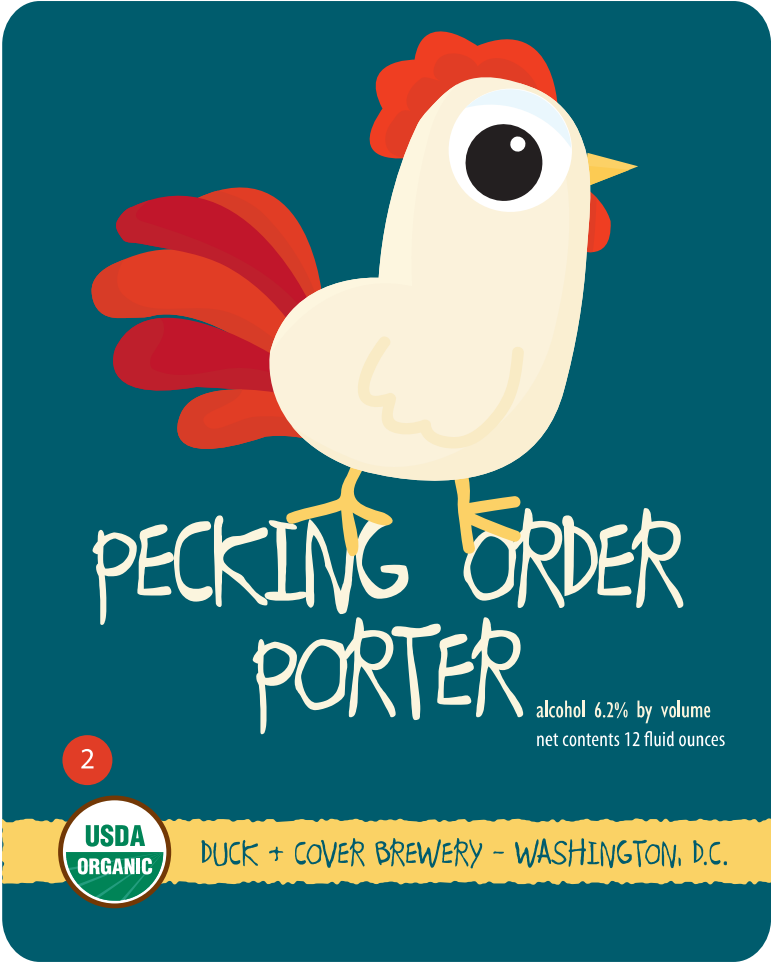
To learn more about specific trade partnerships, visit www.ams.usda.gov/NOPIInternationalAgreements.

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Labeling Category: “Organic”

Malt beverages in the “organic” labeling category must be overseen by a certifier/ACA, who will verify that the malt beverage meets all appropriate specifications in the USDA organic regulations. All agricultural ingredients (e.g., grains, hops, etc.) must be certified organic except per the National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances. Any non-agricultural ingredients must be specifically allowed on the National List and may not exceed a combined 5 percent of the total product (excluding salt and water). Below is an example of an acceptable label for malt beverages meeting all requirements in the “organic” category:



Why the label is acceptable

1. **Certifier/ACA.** The organic certifier/ACA is listed below the brewer or distributor (certified organic by ***). Before being submitted to TTB, this certifier/ACA has reviewed the label and verified that the malt beverage meets all requirements for the “organic” labeling category.
2. **Organic seal.** For “organic” malt beverages, the USDA organic seal (or foreign equivalent if authorized under an equivalency arrangement with the United States) may be used anywhere on the label.

Note changes to requirements for organic hops:

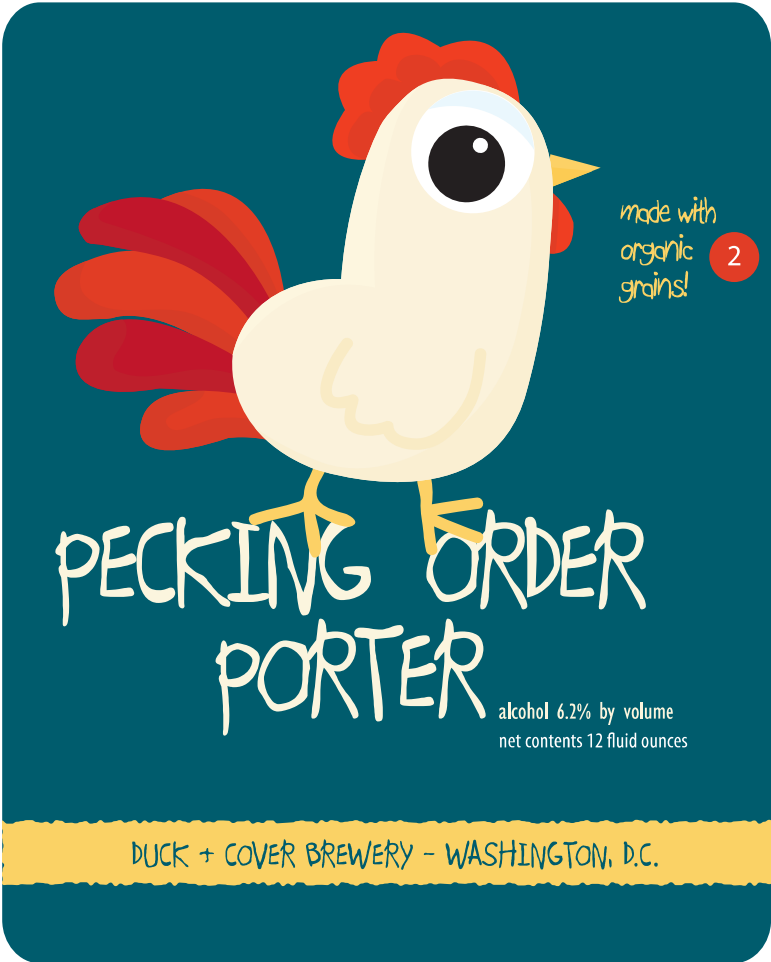
Before January 1, 2013, “organic” malt beverages could contain non-organic hops if the organic variety wasn’t commercially available. Beginning January 1, 2013, all hops in “organic” malt beverages must be certified organic.

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Labeling Category: “Made With” Organic ***

Malt beverages in the “made with” labeling category must be overseen by a certifier/ACA, who will verify that the malt beverage meets all appropriate specifications in the USDA organic regulations. At least 70 percent of the ingredients must be certified organic, but other agricultural ingredients (e.g., hops) are not required to be organic. Non-agricultural ingredients must be specifically allowed on the National List. Below is an example of an acceptable label for a malt beverage meeting all requirements in the “made with organic***” category:



Why the label is acceptable

1. **Certifier/ACA.** The organic certifier/ACA is listed below the brewer or distributor (certified organic by ***). Before being submitted to TTB, this certifier/ACA has reviewed the label and verified that the malt beverage meets all requirements for the “made with organic ***” labeling category. For example, all grains used in the product must be certified organic.
2. **Organic claims.** The USDA organic seal (or foreign equivalent) isn’t anywhere on the label. All words in the statement, “made with organic grains,” are formatted the same (and no more than half the size of the largest text on the label). The certifier/ACA’s logo may be present anywhere.

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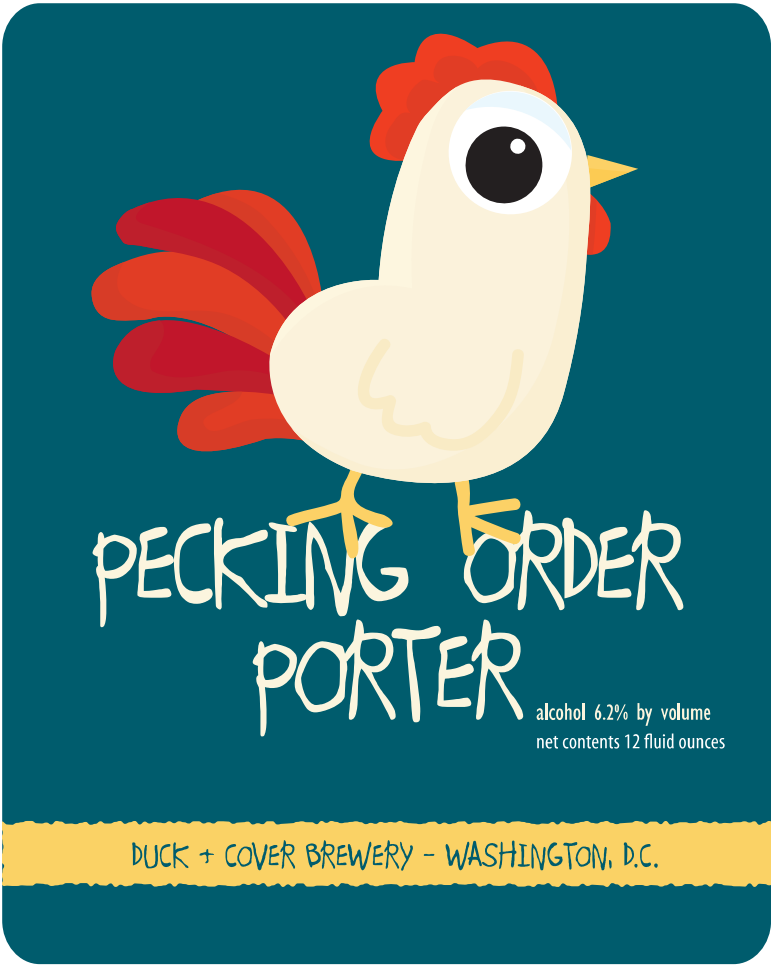
Labeling Category: Not “Organic” or “Made With Organic ***”

If the malt beverage doesn’t meet the requirements of the “organic” or “made with organic ***” labeling categories, it isn’t eligible for organic certification. The handler must obtain copies of ingredients’ organic certificates (“crop reports”) and submit them to the TTB along with the COLA application.

Examples of attributes that would disqualify malt beverage from certification, meaning the malt beverage couldn’t be in the “organic” or “made with organic grapes” labeling category categories:

- Malt beverage contains less than 70 percent certified organic content
- An ingredient was produced through genetic engineering or other prohibited methods

Uncertified malt beverage labels must not use the USDA organic seal (or foreign equivalent) anywhere on the label. The ingredient statement can identify any certified organic ingredients as organic; if the ingredient statement is present, the label may also state the percentage of certified organic ingredients. All other organic claims are prohibited. Below is an example of an acceptable malt beverage label in this category:



Why the label is acceptable

1. The USDA organic seal isn’t present on the label, and organic claims are limited to the ingredient statement.
2. Since the voluntary ingredient statement is present, the percentage of organic ingredients claim is acceptable.

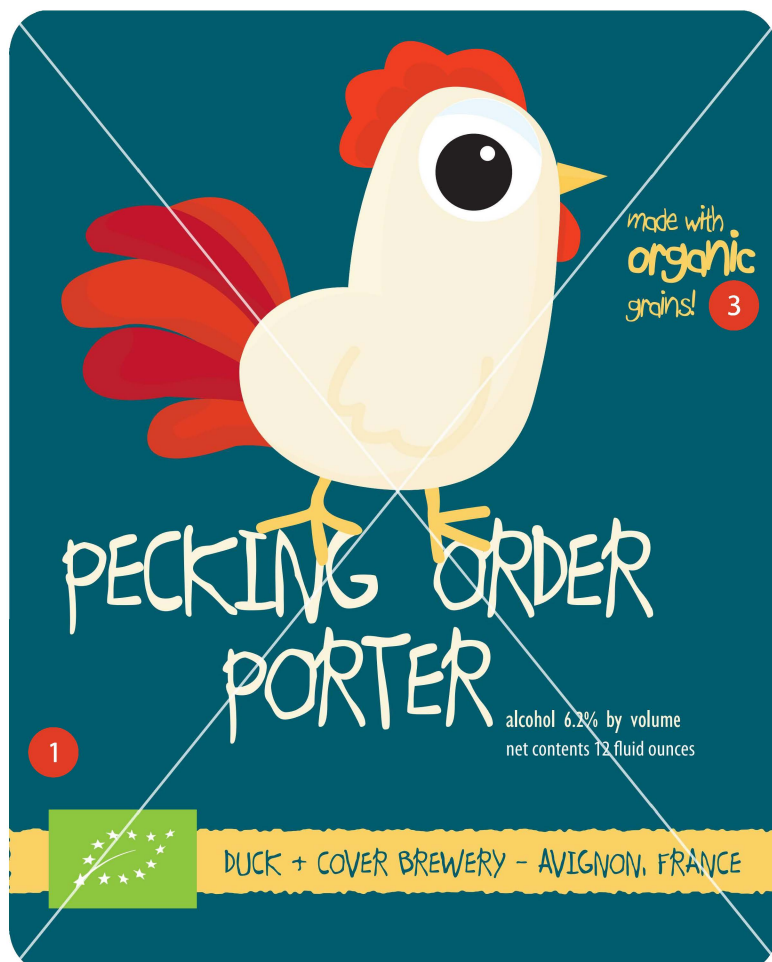
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To increase labeling compliance, here are two examples of unacceptable labels we've seen and how to correct them.

Unacceptable Labels: Example 1

A certifier/ACA confirms this malt beverage contains water, organic malted barley (79.5%), hops (20%), and yeast (0.5%).



Why is the label unacceptable?

1. In the "organic" category, all agricultural ingredients must be certified organic except per the National List. This malt beverage contains non-organic hops and yeast; all hops must be certified organic and yeast must be certified organic unless it is not commercially available in organic form. Therefore, this malt beverage isn't eligible for the "organic" category and the European Union (or USDA) organic logo can't be used.
2. The certifier/ACA's full name isn't included.
3. In the "made with organic grains" statement, words must be formatted the same (and no more than half the size of the largest text on the label).

How can I correct it?

1. Remove the European Union organic logo (it can't be used anywhere on the label).
2. Identify the certifier/ACA ("certified organic by ****"), spelling out the certifier/ACA's full name (not just the code assigned by the European Union).
3. Reformat the "made with organic grains" statement so that all words are formatted the same and don't exceed half the size of the largest text on the label.



Unacceptable Labels: Example 2

A certifier/ACA confirms this malt beverage contains water, malted barley (79.5%), organic hops (20%), and yeast (0.5%).



Why is the label unacceptable?

- 1. Since the finished product contains less than 70 percent certified organic content, you can only make organic claims in the ingredient statement (see page 5).

How can I correct it?

- 1. Remove the “made with organic hops” statement.