

**FORMAL RECOMMENDATION BY THE  
NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS BOARD (NOSB)  
TO THE NATIONAL ORGANIC PROGRAM (NOP)**

**Date:** March 18, 2005

**Subject:** NOSB Recommendation for Rule Change – “Access to Pasture”

**Chair:** \_\_\_\_\_ Jim Riddle \_\_\_\_\_  
(sign)

**Recommendation**

The NOSB hereby recommends to the NOP the following:

Rulemaking Action:   X  

Guidance Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of the Recommendation (including Recount of Vote):**

The NOSB recommends the following:

**1. Rule Change for §205.239(a)(2)**

The NOSB recommends that §205.239(a)(2) be amended to read:

§205.239(a)(2) ~~Access to pasture for ruminants~~ Ruminant animals grazing pasture during the growing season.

This includes all stages of life except:

a) birthing; b) dairy animals up to 6 months of age and c) beef animals during the final finishing stage, not to exceed 120 days. Note: Lactation of dairy animals is not a stage of life under which animals may be denied pasture for grazing.

March 2, 2005 Board vote: 13 – yes, 1 – no, 0 – abstain

**Rationale Supporting Recommendation (including consistency with OFPA and NOP):**

Rationale for change explained in text below.

**Response by the NOP:**

**NOSB Recommendation for Rule Change  
Pasture Requirements for the National Organic Program  
Adopted March 2, 2005**

**Introduction**

The USDA National Organic Program (NOP) has requested NOSB provide guidance concerning the pasture requirements of the National Organic Program that the NOP can review and distribute to accredited certifying agents and post on the NOP website.

The following recommendation is based on the NOSB's June 2000 and October 2001 pasture recommendations and the standards currently required under the NOP regulations, attached in addenda to this document. The NOP Final Rule defines "pasture" as "land used for livestock grazing that is managed to provide feed value and maintain or improve soil, water, and vegetative resources." 7 CFR 205.2. Pasturing is required under the Livestock Health Care Practice Standard (7 CFR 205.238) and under Livestock Living Conditions (7 CFR 239). The Final Rule provides that temporary confinement is allowed in certain circumstances. This recommendation will provide further guidance on the meaning of temporary confinement and stage of life.

As stated in the October 2001 NOSB recommendation, requiring pasture for ruminants ensures an organic production system which provides living conditions that allow animals to satisfy their natural behavior patterns, provides preventative health care benefits and answers the consumer expectation of humane animal care. Organic pasture management reflects a synthesis of crop and livestock production principles that works from the soil up to promote an interdependent community of plants and ruminants. Organically managed pasture should produce the quantity and quality of edible plants suitable to the species, stage of life, and number of animals. Pasture assures a relationship between the animal and land that satisfies both organic principles and international standards for organic livestock.

**Recommendation**

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§205.239(a)(2) ~~Access to pasture for ruminants~~ Ruminant animals grazing pasture during the growing season.

This includes all stages of life except:

a) birthing; b) dairy animals up to 6 months of age<sup>1</sup> and c) beef animals during the final finishing stage, not to exceed 120 days<sup>2</sup>. Note: Lactation of dairy animals is not a stage of life under which animals may be denied pasture for grazing.

**Board vote:**

**13 – yes, 1 – no, 0 - abstain**

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<sup>1</sup> The NOSB recommends 6 months for young animals to allow for weaning and prevention of parasites. (Footnote included as explanatory text – not to be included in rule change.)

<sup>2</sup> The NOSB recommends 120 days for the finishing of bovines based on comments received from beef producers who indicated that 120 days is the amount of time needed to achieve "choice" grades of beef. (Footnote included as explanatory text – not to be included in rule change.)