



Guidelines for Organic Certification of Poultry

The following guidelines are based on the USDA organic regulations (7 CFR §205). In order to be eligible for organic certification, farms must be in compliance with the following standards.

Land Requirements (§205.202)

Land used for pasturing and housing livestock and livestock feed and bedding crops must qualify for organic certification. The organic regulations state that any field or farm parcel, from which harvested crops are intended to be sold as organic, must have had no prohibited substances applied to it for a period of three years immediately preceding the harvest of the crop.

Example to determine if a field qualifies:

A farmer's last fertilizer application is on May 31, 2011.

On May 31, 2012 first transitional year has ended.

On May 31, 2013 second transitional has ended.

On May 31, 2014 third transitional year has ended.

This means after May 31, 2014 pastures or crops harvested can be certified organic.

Please refer to the *Guidelines for Organic Certification of Crops* for a complete description of the organic standards for crops.

Origin of Livestock (§205.236)

Poultry intended for slaughter or egg production must be under continuous organic management beginning no later than the second day of life.

Accepted

- Day old chicks purchased from a conventional hatchery
- Poultry over one day old purchased from certified organic sources

Prohibited

- Purchase of chicks from a conventional hatchery that have not been managed organically from the second day of life

All purchases of organic birds must be accompanied with copies of organic certificates as well as receipts indicating the seller's name, date and number of birds purchased.



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Livestock Feed (§205.237)

All certified animals must receive 100% certified organic feed. All pastures must also be certified organic. If roughages are used as bedding, they must also be certified.

Accepted for feed

- 100% of feed (grains and forages), feed supplements, and/or feed additives, including pastures, that are organically produced, handled and certified under the NOP regulations.
- Water additives (electrolytes, molasses, cider vinegar, etc.) consistent with the National List §205.603.
- Minerals and vitamins that are FDA approved or currently listed in AAFCO will be considered for approval by your organic certifier.

You must keep receipts and accompanying certificates as documentation of off-farm feed purchases. The receipt must verify the quantity and source of feed purchased from off-farm.

All non-organic certified feed supplements, including minerals, must be approved by your certifier. Antibiotics, GMO derived products, animal by-products and synthetic preservatives are not permitted in any feed products. Be sure that any mineral/feed supplements do not contain prohibited ingredients (such as mineral oil). Agricultural substances in feed supplements (molasses, soy oil, etc.) must be certified organic.

Prohibited

- Use of animal drugs, including hormones, to promote growth
- Urea or manure added to feed or in feed formulas.
- Direct fed mammalian or poultry by-products such as animal fats and rendered products (does not include fishmeal).
- Providing feed supplements or additives in amounts over what is needed by the livestock for nutrition and health.
- Kitchen and garden scraps that are not certified organic.

Contact your certifier for a list of dealers who offer organic feed in your area.

Livestock Health Care (§205.238)

Animal health is the result of preventative and on-going management efforts to create living soils, provide nourishing forage and feed, and improve the quality of livestock life. Animals must be kept in healthy, low stress environments. Producers must use preventative health care practices and may only use approved treatments.

Accepted

- Selecting species and types of livestock suitable to the conditions on their farm and resistant to prevalent diseases and parasites
- Providing feed sufficient to meet the needs of the animals, including vitamins, minerals, protein and/or amino acids, fatty acids, energy sources, and fiber
- Establishing appropriate housing, pasture, and sanitation to reduce diseases, parasites and predation



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- Providing animals with the opportunity for exercise, freedom of movement, and reduction of stress
- Administering preventative vaccines and other veterinary biologics
- Performing physical alterations when needed for the animal's welfare, taking care to minimize pain and stress.

Prohibited

- Withholding medical treatment from a sick animal to maintain organic status
- Administering any animal drug in the absence of illness
- Use hormones for promotion of growth of livestock
- Selling, labeling, or representing as organic any animal or animal product that has been treated with antibiotics, a synthetic substance not on the National List, or any prohibited non-synthetic substance

Livestock Living Conditions (§205.239)

Housing must provide for adequate ventilation, adequate supply of clean water and proper sanitation. Housing must provide access to the outdoors, shade, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air and direct sunlight year round. Housing must also provide adequate protection from predators.

Accepted

- Temporary confinement from the outdoors due to inclement weather; the animal's stage of production; conditions under which the health and safety of the animal could be jeopardized; risk to soil or water quality; preventative healthcare procedures or the treatment of illness or injury; breeding; and 4-H or other youth projects.

Prohibited

- Animals confined in such a way that prevents lying down, standing up, fully extending limbs and moving about freely.
- Inadequate clean, dry bedding. If the bedding qualifies as roughage (hay, straw, etc.), it must comply with the feed requirements and be certified organic.
- Continuous total indoor confinement of any animal.

Lumber treated with arsenate or other prohibited substances may not be used for new construction that will come into direct contact with soil or livestock. For example, treated wood should not be used to construct brooder housing or portable pens where poultry can have direct contact with the wood.

Soil Erosion and Water Quality (§205.203)

A producer must select tillage and cultivation and grazing practices that maintain or improve the physical, chemical and biological condition of the soil and minimize erosion.

Manure must be managed in a manner that does not contribute to contamination of crops, soil or water, by plant nutrients, heavy metals, or pathogenic organisms and optimizes the recycling of nutrients.



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Egg and Carcass Washes (§205.605)

Due to the porous nature of egg shells, egg cleaners are considered to be food additives and must be on the National List of allowed non-agricultural substances.

Water used in direct post-harvest contact for egg or carcass washing is permitted to contain chlorine materials at levels approved by the Food and Drug Administration or the Environmental Protection Agency for such purpose. However, rinsing with potable water that does not exceed the maximum residual disinfectant limit for the chlorine material under the Safe Drinking Water Act (4ppm) must immediately follow this permitted use. Chlorine solutions used to sanitize eggs, if at levels added over 4ppm, must be followed by clean water rinse at no more than 4ppm residual chlorine levels.

The following egg wash ingredients are allowed for use in organic egg production:

- Sodium hypochlorite
- Potassium hydroxide, sodium hydroxide
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Sodium carbonate
- Peracetic acid (Peroxyacetic acid)

Other additives/ egg coatings: Mineral oil is not listed on the National List Section 205.605 and therefore may not be used to coat eggs after washing. Organic vegetable oils would be allowed for this purpose.

Slaughter (§205.102)

Meat that is to be sold, labeled, or represented as organic must be from an animal that was under continuous organic management from no later than its second day of life. A certified organic slaughter facility must be used for processing meat that is to be marketed as organic. If processing poultry for commercial sales, all state and federal regulations must be met.

Marketing and Labeling (§205.303)

Livestock products that are packaged and to be sold, labeled or represented as "100% organic" or "organic" must include the following on the information panel of your label:

- Handler information: name of handler and business address
- Followed by "Certified organic by ***", identifying the name of the certifying agent responsible for certifying the handler of the finished product

Additionally, the agricultural products in packages that are to be sold, labeled or represented as "100% organic" or "organic" may display on the package panel or any marketing/labeling information about the product the following:

- The term "100% organic" or "organic, as applicable to modify the name of the product
- The USDA seal and/or your certifier's logo/seal



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For more details of USDA label requirements, it is recommended that you contact your certifier. Most certifiers require label review and approval prior to the use of the label in the sale of agricultural products to be sold or represented as organic.

Record Keeping (§205.103)

Written records must be kept on an ongoing basis. Records are essential, as organic certification is about verifying your farming practices to a third party. Maintaining records can also help producers improve their management. Records must be “readily auditable” (accessible, organized, and complete) and must be maintained for five years. In general, your record keeping system must allow a third party to trace your management from birth/purchase to death/sales. Many certifiers provide record keeping templates but also accept farm-specific systems, so long as they include the necessary information.

Records that must be kept by poultry producers may include:

- Feed receipts and certificates
- Receipts and certificates for all purchased forages and/or bedding hay/straw
- Sales records
- Production records
- Mortality/cull records

Please refer to your certifier’s guidelines for a more detailed explanation of the USDA organic regulations. If you have any questions regarding the standards or the application process, please contact your certifier.



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