



Guidelines No 10 LIVESTOCK FARMING: MAMMALS

TS10(NOP)v01en – January 2025

According to the USDA National Organic Program (NOP)



This document does not supersede current USDA Regulations. ECOCERT Guidelines provide a summary of the main NOP organic production requirements. For full detailed information on NOP organic production, please refer to and download NOP Regulation updates on USDA website: www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/NOP

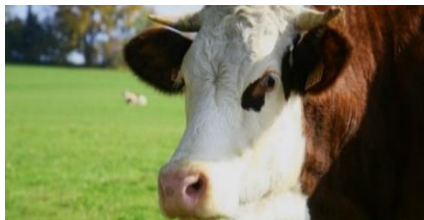


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1 INTRODUCTION



This document provides a summary of the USDA National Organic Program (NOP) requirements for the organic production of mammals with regards notably to ruminants (cattle/bovine, sheep, goats, cervine), swine, equine animals (used for meat). These requirements apply to animals used for meat, milk, fiber, feed or other agricultural-based consumer products. This document is designed as a practical reference and does not replace the official NOP regulations.

Note: While poultry, domesticated game, or other non-avian animals (e.g. bees) may also be certified, they are not the focus of this guide.

For complete certification requirements, you may refer to **ECOCERT Guidelines n°1, TS01 NOP Certification scheme (part II and IV)**. The Organic System Plan (OSP) must detail how the NOP requirements are met.

2 CATEGORICALLY PROHIBITED PRACTICES (§205.105)

The following practices are **strictly prohibited** under NOP organic standards:

- **Excluded methods** (genetic modification): Any method that genetically modifies organisms (except for approved vaccines when applicable).
- **Cloning.**
- **Ionizing Radiation:** Use of ionizing radiation to preserve food or materials.
- **Sewage Sludge:** Application of sewage sludge to land or crops.

3 ORIGIN OF LIVESTOCK (§205.236)

A. GENERAL RULES

Organic livestock products must be from livestock under continuous organic management **from the last third of the gestation**.

All animals raised as organic **slaughter stock** must have been raised under continuous organic management from the last third of gestation. The producer must maintain



records sufficient to keep track of the identity of all organically managed animals, including transitioned dairy animals. Records must be traceable to edible and non-edible animal products produced on the operation.

B. EXCEPTIONS (use of non-organic animals)

DAIRY ANIMALS:

- Transitioning an entire herd from non-organic to organic management is allowed if the animals are managed organically for at least 1 year. During this period:
 - Animals may be fed with crop and forage from land in the third year of transition as detailed in the OSP.
 - Offspring must meet specific feeding requirements to qualify for organic certification.
 - Once an entire distinct herd has been transitioned to organic production: All dairy animals shall be under organic management from the last third of gestation. All dairy animals shall end transition at the same time.

Transition conditions applied by the operation must be described in the OSP (start date of the transition, identification of animals concerned, feed ration).

BREEDER STOCK:

Male: May be managed as non-organic and brought onto an organic operation at any time. Cannot be represented or sold as organic livestock.

Female: May be non-organic and brought onto an organic operation at any time but no later than the last 1/3 of the gestation in order the offspring to be organic. Can nurse her own offspring as long as she is managed organically (even if the milk could not be sold as organic). Breeding methods: Embryo transfer, in-vitro fertilization, and artificial insemination are allowed, but cloning is forbidden.

C. PROHIBITED PRACTICES

Livestock that leave an organic operation and are then managed non-organically lose their organic status permanently. This applies to products such as meat, milk, and fiber.

4 LIVESTOCK FEED (§205.237)



A. GENERAL RULES

The agricultural products of the feed ration (including pasture and forage) must be organically produced and certified. (Except: during the year of transition, dairy animals and their offspring can be fed with crops and forage from land in the 3rd year of transition and included in the OSP of the dairy farm).

Permitted additives and feed supplements:

- Synthetic substances allowed under § 205.603, such as vitamins and trace minerals.
- Non-synthetic substances unless explicitly listed as prohibited in § 205.604.

B. PROHIBITED FEED MATERIALS

The following are **not allowed**:

- Animal drugs, including hormones, to promote growth
- Feed supplements or additives exceeding nutritional needs
- Plastic pellets for roughage
- Urea or manure in feed formulas
- Feed made from mammalian or poultry slaughter by-products
- Feed or forage containing added antibiotic or ionophores

C. ACCESS TO PASTURE FOR RUMINANTS

Except under specific conditions, it is forbidden to prevent, restrain and withhold **ruminants** from actively obtaining feed grazed from pasture during the grazing season.

Requirement	Details
Minimum Grazing Season Length	120 days per year (may vary to be longer than 120 days by location due to climate or regional conditions)
Minimum DMI from Pasture	30% average of total Dry Matter Intake (DMI) during the grazing season. <i>It is not permitted to provide >70% of DMD in feed during the grazing season.</i>
Exceptions	Temporary confinement or denial of pasture is permitted for health, safety or environmental reasons, or for specified periods such as dairy cow dry-off or pre-birth.

1. Grazing Season:



Grazing season is defined as the period during which pasture is available for grazing, due to natural precipitation or irrigation. Key considerations include:

- Season Variability: The grazing season dates may vary annually based on regional weather patterns.
- Continuity: The grazing season does not need to be continuous and may be extended through the grazing of residual forage (as described in operation's Organic System Plan).
- Duration: The grazing season may range from 120 days to 365 days but cannot be **less than 120 days per year** for all ruminant livestock over six months of age.

2. Pasture Quality and Quantity:

Producers are required to ensure that pastures meet the following standards to provide adequate nutrition:

Dry Matter Intake (DMI):

- Ruminants must obtain **an average of at least 30 % of their Dry Matter Intake (DMI)** from pasture during the grazing season.
- No more than 70% of a ruminant's **Dry Matter Demand (DMD) can come from** dry matter as fed (ex. hay, grain, silage)

DMI is calculated as an average over the entire grazing season for each type and class of animal (e.g. lactating dairy cows, replacement heifers, slaughter steers)

3. Exemptions from the 30% DMI Requirement

- Temporary confinement from pasture is permitted (as described in "Livestock Living Conditions"). Livestock are still required to meet the requirement of minimum 30% of their DMI from grazing averaged over the grazing season.
- Breeding bulls are exempt from the 30% DMI requirement and may be confined or tethered as necessary. Breeding bulls managed under this exemption cannot be sold as organic slaughter stock.
- During the finishing period slaughter stock are exempt from the minimum 30 % DMI requirement from grazing. The finishing period shall not exceed one-fifth of that animal's total life or 120 days.

D. FEED RECORDS



Livestock producers must maintain the following feed records for each animal group (type and class of animal):

- On-farm feed production.
- Off-farm feed purchases.
- Feed types, including pasture, as a percentage of the total feed ration.
- Seasonal changes to rations.
- A list of all feed supplements and additives.

5 LIVESTOCK HEALTH CARE PRACTICES (§205:238)

A. DISEASE PREVENTION (Preventive practices)

To **minimize disease and promote animal welfare**, producers must:

- Select breeds that are disease and parasite-resistant and suited to the regional environment.
- Provide healthy, balanced feed rations.
- Maintain appropriate housing, pasture and living conditions, and sanitation practices.
- Implement a parasite control plan, including pasture management, fecal monitoring, and emergency measures in the event of parasite outbreak.
- Allow conditions for exercise, movement, and stress reduction.
- Administration vaccines and other veterinary biologics when necessary.
- Use surgical procedures only to treat illness or injury, minimizing pain and stress.
- Monitoring, appropriate treatment and prevention of lameness.
- Physical alterations are permitted for identification purposes or safety of the animals. They must be performed at a young age and by qualified personnel in a manner that minimizes pain and stress to the animal. Tail docking and needle teeth clipping (no more than top 1/3 of the tooth) may be practiced in pigs only with documentary evidence of the ineffectiveness of alternative methods.

Prohibited practices:

- Tail docking of cattle, wattling of cattle, face branding of cattle, tail docking of sheep shorter than the distal end of the caudal fold, mulesing of sheep.

B. VETERINARY TREATMENT

When preventive practices and veterinary biologics are inadequate to prevent sickness, **synthetic medication** allowed under **§205.603** can only be used to treat illness and must



adhere to any required withdrawal periods.

Furthermore, **parasiticides** listed in §205.603 (Fenbendazole and Moxidectin) when used for emergency treatment for dairy and breeder stock, will require specific withdrawal periods as further detailed in the regulations. **NO use of synthetic parasiticides are permitted for slaughter stock.**

Milk from animals treated with synthetic medication allowed under § 205.603 with associated withdrawal period cannot be sold as organic during the withdrawal period but can be fed to young stock on the same operation.

C. PROHIBITED PRACTICES

- Use of **antibiotics** or synthetic substances not allowed under §205.603 and non-synthetic substances listed in § 205.604 (e.g. strychnine).
 - Administration of synthetic medication (except for vaccines) in the absence of illness (as a preventive action) or not to alleviate pain and suffering.
 - Use of growth, production or reproductive hormones, except as permitted under § 205.603.
 - Withholding medical treatment from a sick animal to maintain organic status.
 - Withholding individual treatment to minimize pain and suffering for injured, disease or sick animals, including euthanasia where necessary.
- ➔ Livestock treated with a prohibited substance must be clearly identified and shall not be sold or represented as organic.
- ➔ Treatment of sick and injured animals shall be recorded in animal health records.

D. EUTHANASIA

For sick or injured animal suffering from irreversible disease or injury, the producer must have written plans for prompt and humane euthanasia, including examination to ensure death of the animals.

The following methods of euthanasia are not permitted: suffocation; manual blow to the head by blunt instrument or manual blunt force trauma and the use of equipment that crushes the neck, including killing pliers or Burdizzo clamps.

6 LIVESTOCK LIVING CONDITIONS (§205.239)

A. GENERAL RULES FOR ALL LIVESTOCK



Producers must establish and maintain living conditions that support the health, well-being, and natural behavior of the livestock. The following requirements must be met:

➤ **General Requirements:**

- All animals (suitable to their stage of life, the climate, and the environment) must have year-round access to outdoor access, shade, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air, clean water for drinking, and direct sunlight.
- Outdoor areas with soil must maintain vegetative cover suitable to the season, climate, geography, species of livestock, and stage of production.

➤ **Prohibitions:**

- Continuous total confinement of any animal indoors is prohibited.

➤ **Bedding:**

- Livestock must be provided with clean, dry bedding.
- Bedding materials that may be consumed by animals (e.g., roughages) must meet the feed requirements and be organically produced and handled.

1) Management of yards, feeding pads, feedlots and laneways

- Drainage & maintenance: All areas must be well-drained and regularly maintained/cleaned to prevent waterlogging and the accumulation of waste.
- Management practices must prevent the runoff of wastes and contaminated waters to adjoining or nearby surface water and across property boundaries and to avoid soil degradation.

2) Housing conditions

Housing/shelter should be designed and maintained to ensure the comfort, safety and natural behaviors of livestock. Key requirements include:

- Space and movement: Over a 24-hour period, animals must have sufficient space and freedom: to lie down, turn around, stand up, fully stretch the limbs, and express normal patterns of behavior. *Group-housed cattle, bedded packs, compost packs, tie-stalls, free stalls and stanchion barns are acceptable housing so long as the producer uses them in a way that is compatible with that requirement.*
- Environmental suitability: Temperature, ventilation, and air circulation suitable to the species. Conditions that minimize the risk of livestock injury



- Bedding and resting areas: Indoor housing must have areas for bedding and resting that are sufficiently large, solidly built, and comfortable. Keep animals clean and dry. Prevent lesions or injuries.
- In confined housing with stalls, enough stalls must be present to provide for the natural behaviors of the animals. Cages are not considered stalls.

Housing in Individual pens for dairy, young stock:

- Dairy young stock may be housed in individual pens until weaning process, provided that they have enough room to turn around, lie down, stretch out when lying down, get up, rest, and groom themselves.
- Individual animal pens shall be designed and located so that each animal can see, smell, and hear other animals.

B. ADDITIONAL RULES FOR RUMINANTS

Access to pasture is required throughout the grazing season. Operations may use yards, feeding pads, and/or feedlots to provide **ruminants** with access to the outdoors **during the non-grazing season** and supplemental feeding during the grazing season:

- Yards, feeding pads and feedlots shall be large enough to allow all **ruminant** livestock occupying the space to feed simultaneously without crowding and without competition for food.
- **Continuous total confinement of ruminants in yards, feeding pads and feedlots is prohibited.**

C. ADDITIONAL RULES FOR SWINE (PORCINE) ANIMALS

Swine must be housed in a group except:

- Sows may be housed individually at farrowing and during the suckling period; gestation and farrowing crates are prohibited.
- Boars
- Individual housing is permitted for swine with multiple documented instances of aggression or for recovery from an illness.

Piglets shall not be kept on flat decks or in cages

Rooting materials must be provided, except during the farrowing and suckling period.

For group-housed swine, the number of individual feeding stalls may be less than the number of animals, as long as all animals are fed routinely over a 24-hour period.



D. TEMPORARY CONFINEMENT OR SHELTER FOR ALL LIVESTOCK

Livestock may be *temporarily* (*) denied access to the outdoors and to pasture (for Ruminants) under the following **exceptional circumstances**:

- **Inclement weather**
- **Specific life stage** [A discrete time in an animal's life which requires specific management practices different than during other periods], including:
 - Dry off (one week), pre-parturition (3 weeks), birthing, post-parturition (1 week)
 - Newborn dairy cattle for up to six months
 - Shearing periods for fiber bearing animals
 - Daily milking periods. Lactation is not a stage of life that would exempt ruminants.
- **Health, safety or environmental risks**
- **Breeding:** Except, that, animals shall not be confined any longer than necessary for natural breeding or to perform artificial insemination. Animals may not be confined to observe estrus, and animals may not be confined after breeding to confirm pregnancy
- **Risk to soil or water quality** (e.g. after a very heavy rainfall to help minimize soil erosion and runoff)
- **Preventive healthcare procedures or for the treatment of illness or injury.**
- **Sorting or shipping animals and livestock sales** [animals shall be maintained under continuous organic management, including organic feed during the allowed confinement]
- **Participation in a fair** or other demonstration for youth projects, confinement is possible up to one week prior to the event, through the event and up to 24 hours returning to the holding. During the confinement, livestock must be maintained under continuous organic management, notably be organically fed.

(*) temporary and temporarily: occurring for a limited time only (e.g. overnight, throughout a storm, during a period of illness), not permanent or lasting.

Producers must document confinement. Records should include the reason, duration of the confinement, and the livestock affected by confinement.

E. FINISHING PERIOD OF RUMINANT SLAUGHTER STOCK

Ruminant slaughter stock must remain on pasture during the grazing season for their geographic location, except when using yards, feeding pads, or feedlots for finishing



rations. During the finishing period, they are exempt from the 30% Dry Matter Intake (DMI) from grazing requirement. Feeding areas must be spacious enough to prevent crowding and competition for food. The finishing period cannot exceed one-fifth of the animal's lifespan or 120 days, whichever is shorter.

F. MANAGEMENT OF MANURE IN ALL CASES

Operators must **manage manure** in a manner that does not contribute to contamination of crops, soil or water by plant nutrients, heavy metals or pathogenic organisms and shall **optimize recycling of nutrients**.

7 PASTURE PRACTICE (§ 205.240)

A. MANAGEMENT OF PASTURE FOR RUMINANTS

Producers must manage pasture as a crop, following the NOP rules for plant production, with specific considerations for ruminant grazing.

- Pasture management does not include crop rotation provisions (§205.205) or cultivation practices (e.g. tillage).
- Annual crops used for ruminant grazing must comply fully with NOP crop production standards (§205.202—205.206).
- Where available, irrigation must be used as needed to support pasture growth and maintain forage availability.

Operators must manage pasture to:

- Provide daily grazing throughout the grazing season for all ruminants
- Ensure sufficient quantity and quality to meet the minimum 30% DMI requirement throughout the grazing season
- Minimize the risk of disease and parasites through appropriate pasture management practices.
- Protect soil and water quality, avoiding practices that cause erosion or contamination.
-

B. Organic System Plan (OSP): PASTURE PLAN

A **comprehensive and current pasture plan** must be included in the operator's OSP. Key requirements include:

- Description of the Pasture Plan



- Pasture types – all types of pasture provided, including annual and perennial forage.
- Cultural and management practices – describe methods to ensure sufficient and accessible pasture during the grazing season.
- Grazing season – describe the grazing season's dates and lengths, based on regional conditions.
- Pasture locations and sizes – Acreage details and maps with pasture identification.
- Grazing methods – Outline methods of grazing such as rotational grazing, residual forage utilization, etc.
- Infrastructure – Include the location and types of fences, shade structures/source, and water sources.
- Soil fertility – Include practices for maintaining soil fertility and reseeding pastures as needed.
- Erosion control – Include measures to prevent erosion and safeguard natural wetlands and riparian areas.

8 TRANSPORT AND SLAUGHTER (\$205.242)

A. TRANSPORTATION

- **Identification and traceability:** Animals must be clearly identified and traceable during transportation.
- **Fitness for Transport:**
 - Only **fit animals** may be transported. Seriously crippled and non-ambulatory animals must not be transported for sale or slaughter. Such animals may be medically treated or euthanized.
 - Calves must have a dry navel cord and be able to stand and walk without human assistance
 - Adequate and season-appropriate ventilation is required during transport to protect animals against cold and heat stress.
- **Extended Transport (>8 hours):**
 - Organic management and animal welfare must be maintained (e.g. arrangement for water and organic feed).
 - Emergency plans must address possible animal welfare problems that might occur during transport.



- During transport and prior to slaughter, bedding must be provided on trailer floors and in holding pens, as needed to keep animals clean, dry and comfortable (when roughages are used for bedding, they must be certified organic)

B. SLAUGHTER

Certified producers and handlers who slaughter organic livestock (cattle, sheep, goat, swine, horse, mule or other equine) must comply with the Federal Meat Inspection Act ([21 USC 603\(b\)](#) and [610 \(b\)](#)) and the US regulation at [9 CFR part 313](#) regarding human methods of slaughter and [9 CFR 309](#) regarding ante-mortem inspection.

Certified producers and handlers who slaughter organic exotic animals (antelope, bison, buffalo, cattalo, deer, elk, reindeer, and water buffalo, ...) must comply with the [Agricultural Marketing Act](#) and the US regulation at [9 CFR part 313](#) and [352](#) regarding human methods of slaughter and [9 CFR 309](#) regarding ante-mortem inspection.

9 POST-HARVEST HANDLING (§205.270 – §205.272)

Handling and storage of organic animal products must be done in a manner that avoids commingling with nonorganic products and protects organic products from contact with prohibited substances. Special care must be taken not to use or re-use (without thorough cleaning) packing materials that have been in contact with substances which might compromise the integrity of organic products.

10 ALLOWED AND PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES USED IN THE NOP (§205.603 – §205.604)

All materials used by the operation must comply with the standards for agricultural practices summarized above and as detailed on the National List. The List §205.600 to §205.606 are essentially divided into two categories of materials: synthetic and non-synthetic (natural).

Section 205.603 lists allowed synthetic materials for use in organic livestock operations, some of these materials have special annotations or restrictions on their use. Other synthetic materials than the ones mentioned here are not allowed.

Section 205.604 is a short list of prohibited natural materials for use in organic livestock



production. Other natural materials are generally allowed.

11 DEFINITIONS (§205.2)

Animal drug: an article intended for use in the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment or prevention of disease in livestock and article intended to affect the structure of any function of the body of animals, including any drug intended for use in livestock feed but not including such livestock feed.

Breeder stock: Female livestock whose offspring may be incorporated into an organic operation at the time of their birth.

Cattle wattling: The surgical separation of two layers of the skin from the connective tissue along a 2-to-4-inch path on the dewlap, neck, or shoulders used for ownership identification.

Dry matter intake: Total pounds of all feed, devoid of all moisture, consumed by a class of animals over a given period of time.

Feed : Edible materials which are consumed by livestock for their nutritional value. Feed may be concentrates (grains) or roughages (hay, silage, fodder). The term, “feed,” encompasses all agricultural commodities, including pasture ingested by livestock for nutritional purposes.

Feed additive: A substance added to feed in micro quantities to fulfill a specific nutritional need; i.e., essential nutrients in the form of amino acids, vitamins, and minerals.

Feed supplement: A combination of feed nutrients added to livestock feed to improve the nutrient balance or performance of the total ration and intended to be:

- Diluted with other feeds when fed to livestock;
- Offered free choice with other parts of the ration if separately available; or
- Further diluted and mixed to produce a complete feed.

Feedlot: a dry lot (fenced area that may be covered with concrete, but that has little or no vegetative cover) for the controlled feeding of livestock.

Forage: Vegetative material in a fresh, dried, or ensiled state (pasture, hay, or silage), which is fed to livestock.



Indoors or indoor space: The space inside of an enclosed building or housing structure available to livestock.

Outdoors or outdoor space: Any area outside an enclosed building or enclosed housing structure. Enclosed housing structures with open sides (e.g., open-sided freestall barns) are not to be considered outdoors or outdoor space.

Mulesing: The removal of skin from the buttocks of sheep, approximately 2 to 4 inches wide and running away from the anus to the hock to prevent fly strike.

Non-ambulatory disabled livestock: Livestock that cannot rise from a recumbent position or that cannot walk, including, but not limited to, those with broken appendages, severed tendons or ligaments, nerve paralysis, fractured vertebral column, or metabolic conditions.

Pasture: Land used for livestock grazing that is managed to provide feed value and maintain or improve soil, water, and vegetative resources.

Shelter: Structures such as barns, sheds, or windbreaks; or natural areas such as woods, tree lines, large hedge rows, or geographic land features, that are designed or selected to provide physical protection or housing to all animals.

Slaughter stock: Any animal that is intended to be slaughtered for consumption by humans or other animals.

Stocking density: The liveweight or number of animals on a given area or unit of land.

Third-year transitional crop: Crops and forage from land included in the organic system plan of a producer's operation that is not certified organic but is in the third year of organic management and is eligible for organic certification in one year or less.

Yards/Feeding pad: An area for feeding, exercising, and outdoor access for livestock during the non-grazing season and a high traffic area where animals may receive supplemental feeding during the grazing season.

Prior to using commercial inputs, operators must ensure they are NOP compliant.



Relevant detailed information may be provided to ECOCERT in order to check all active and non-active ingredients are approved.

For further information on the NOP, please visit the USDA/NOP homepage <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/nop>

Please check NOP input compliance on the OMRI homepage www.omri.org (a Commercial Product list is available; the Generic Materials list is made available upon request).

For further information on ECOCERT, please visit www.ecocert.com (certification, certified inputs and other activities)

Please contact your ECOCERT Certification Officer for further query.

