

An Introduction to Organic Livestock Production CCOF



As consumers demand to know more about where their food comes from and the quality of conditions under which animals are raised, they are looking for the USDA organic seal. The organic label provides customers at all steps of the supply chain with the assurance that animals have been humanely raised and handled in accordance with strict organic standards. What does it take to become certified organic for your livestock production?

Organic producers must submit an Organic System Plan to CCOF to be considered for organic certification. In completing CCOF's Organic System Plan forms, you will describe your land and livestock management practices, including records kept, feed provided, medicines administered, and the history of your land over the last three years.

All organic operations must be inspected prior to certification and at least once per year thereafter. Following successful review of your first organic inspection, you will be eligible to use the USDA organic logo and CCOF's logo to market your animals or animal product as organic. Below is a summary of the requirements for organic certification.

Feed & Water

- Organic animals must eat only organic feed. For poultry, this must be from the second day of life. For other animals, the breeder stock must be fed organic starting at the last third of gestation.
- All land producing feed for organic animals must also be certified organic, meaning that no prohibited herbicides, pesticides, or fertilizers may be applied for at least three years.
- **Animal slaughter byproducts, antibiotics, plastic pellets, manure are prohibited in feed.**
- Ruminants: Pasture must be provided for ruminants throughout the grazing season and must constitute an average of 30% of their dry matter intake over the course of the grazing season.
- For dairy animals, there is a one-time allowance to transition a milking herd to organic through one year of organic management, including all organic feed. Following the initial transition, all animals must be fed organic feed.
- Year-round access to fresh, clean water for drinking is required.



(831) 423-2263 • ccof@ccof.org • www.ccof.org

An Introduction to Organic Livestock Production *(continued)*



Medicines

- Only non-synthetic medicines and synthetic medicines that have been specifically reviewed and approved for use in organics may be administered (see CCOF's Synthetic Medicines Allowed in Organic Livestock Production information sheet).
- Dewormers may never be used for slaughter stock. Ivermectin is allowed for emergency treatment of non-organic breeder stock and dairy animals during non-lactation periods.
- Preventative healthcare practices, including a nutritious diet, appropriate housing, clean air, reduction of stress, access to the outdoors and access to exercise areas are the primary focus of organic livestock producers.
- The following are among the allowed medical treatments: vaccines, vitamins, minerals, probiotics (non-GMO), herbal remedies, and electrolytes.
- Antibiotics and growth hormones may **never** be used.
- All appropriate medications must be used to restore an animal to health when organic methods fail. Animals treated with prohibited materials may not be sold as organic.

Living Conditions

- Living conditions must accommodate the health and natural behavior of animals, including year-round access to:
 - » Outdoors
 - » Exercise areas
 - » Fresh air
 - » Direct Sunlight
 - » Shade
 - » Shelter
- Pasture must be provided throughout the grazing season for all ruminants. The grazing season must not be less than 120 days per year, and may be up to 365 days per year. If available, irrigation water must be used to extend the length of the grazing season.
- Clean, dry bedding (including straw, shaving, sand, etc.) is required for all housed animals (rangeland okay). Bedding must be certified organic if it is a roughage, or in the case of non-roughage materials, untreated (e.g. wood shavings).

If you meet the guidelines above or can modify your practices to meet the guidelines above, apply for certification today to start receiving the benefits of the organic seal. CCOF's experienced staff is ready to provide you with professional attention during the certification process. CCOF also offers expedited certification services if you are on a short timeline.

CCOF can also offer your business support in marketing your products through reduced cost advertising in our quarterly magazine, publication of your operation's name and products in our printed and online directory and participation in CCOF sponsored events.

The information above is intended to provide a general overview of the organic standards only. To review the standards in full, please visit CCOF's website at www.ccof.org where you can find additional resources to aid you in transitioning to organic production, apply for certification, and search for currently certified CCOF operations in your area.

