

Fact Sheet:

Organic Livestock Production: Key Requirements



1. Organic System Plan

- Producers must develop an Organic System Plan (OSP) detailing practices and substances used in production, ensuring compliance with organic standards.

2. Origin of livestock



- **Breeder stock.** May be non-organic if brought to the operation before the last third of gestation.
- **Dairy animals.** Must be under organic management for at least one year before producing organic milk.
- **Slaughter animals.** Must be under continuous organic management from the last third of gestation.



3. Livestock feed

- Animals must receive 100% organic feed, including pasture and forage.
- Use of synthetic substances, animal by-products, and certain feed additives is prohibited.



4. Health care practices

- Emphasis on preventive health care through proper nutrition, housing, and sanitation.
- Use of antibiotics and synthetic parasiticides is generally prohibited.
- Vaccinations and certain approved medications are allowed when preventive measures are insufficient.



5. Living conditions

- Animals must have access to the outdoors, including shade, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air, and direct sunlight.
- Temporary confinement is permitted under specific conditions, such as inclement weather or health risks.



6. Pasture requirements

- Ruminant animals (e.g., cattle, sheep, goats) must have access to pasture during the grazing season.
- At least 30% of their dry matter intake must come from pasture during this period.



7. Animal welfare

- Practices that promote animal welfare, such as appropriate handling and minimizing stress, are required.
- Physical alterations (e.g., dehorning, castration) should be performed in a manner that minimizes pain and stress.



8. Recordkeeping

- Detailed records of all livestock management activities, including health care, feed, and breeding, must be maintained.



9. Processing and handling

- Organic integrity must be maintained during processing and handling.
- Facilities must prevent commingling with non-organic products and contamination with prohibited substances.



10. Certification

- Producers must be certified by a U.S. Department of Agriculture-accredited certifying agent to market products as organic.



For detailed information and guidance, refer to the “Guide for Organic Livestock Producers” provided by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

