

Organic Livestock Tip Sheet

New to organics? Use this tip sheet as a quick guide to some of the relevant regulations for handlers and processors. This sheet is **not** intended as a full overview of organic regulations, only as a helpful guide as you orient yourself to the regulatory framework.

You can find the full text of the National Organic Program regulations online: [eCFR 7 Part 205](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-7--agriculture/part-205).

For further information, please see the below resources:

- [NOP Certification Manual](#)
- [National Organic Program Handbook](#)

Important National Organic Program (NOP) Regulations

Regulation	Key Takeaways - Click the Regulation for Full Text
National List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances § 205.600-606	<p>Also called The National List, this section covers the actual substances, not branded products, that are allowed or prohibited in organic production.</p>
Organic System Plans §205.201	<p>In order to be certified to the USDA Organic standard, you must create and maintain an Organic System Plan (OSP). An OSP is a complete record of your operation that outlines all your practices.</p>
Origin of Livestock § 205.236	<p>The requirement for the origin of organic livestock depends on the type of livestock. Livestock raised for organic meat must be managed organically from the last third of gestation, while poultry must be under organic management beginning no later than the second day of life. A dairy herd can be converted to produce organic milk or milk products after the animals have been under organic management for at least one year. Once converted, all dairy animals are to be managed organically from the last third of gestation. A nonorganic dairy may transition to organic production one-time only and all dairy animals must end the transition at the same time. Additionally, a certified organic dairy may not source or sell transitioned animals and may not transition additional animals to organic production.</p>

<p><u>Livestock Feed</u> <u>§ 205.237</u></p>	<p>Organic livestock are raised on organically produced feed, including pasture and forage. Nonsynthetic substances and approved trace minerals and vitamins are allowed as feed additives, provided that all agricultural ingredients in the mix are certified organic. Additionally, ruminant livestock must be provided with not less than 30 percent of their dry matter from pasture during the grazing season. A grazing season can be no less than 120 days and must be appropriate for the geographical climate.</p>
<p><u>Livestock Care and Production Practice Standards</u> <u>§205.238</u></p>	<p>Preventative health care practices including the use of vaccines are the keystone of organic livestock health care. If preventative practices are not effective, synthetic medications listed in § 205.603 of the NOP may be used. The NOP also defines what practices are allowed and prohibited regarding livestock undergoing physical alterations, what livestock and livestock products can be represented as organic for animals undergoing treatment with synthetic substances, parasite control plans, and euthanasia.</p>
<p><u>Mammalian and Non-Avian Livestock Living Conditions</u> <u>§205.239</u></p>	<p>Living conditions for organic livestock are meant to accommodate the wellbeing and natural behavior of animals. This includes access to the outdoors, shade, shelter, sunlight, fresh air and exercise. The NOP defines minimum requirements for shelters per class of livestock; generally, all shelters must allow each animal to lie down, turn around, stand and fully stretch over a 24 hour period, and indoor housing must have areas for bedding and resting. Outdoor space must be provided year-round for all animals; outdoors space with soil must also have vegetative cover. Ruminants must have access to pasture and, when appropriate, livestock must be provided clean, dry bedding. Temporary confinement is only permitted under specific circumstances described in the regulation. The total confinement of ruminants in yards, feeding pads and feedlots is not permitted.</p>
<p><u>Land Use Requirements</u> <u>§ 205.202</u></p>	<p>Land must be free of prohibited substances for 36 continuous months before being eligible for certification. Buffer zones must be maintained between organic crops and non-organic crops and/or prohibited substances.</p>
<p><u>Labeling</u> <u>§ 205.300-311</u></p>	<p>The NOP has specific labeling requirements for organic livestock products. If you seek certification through QCS, labels must be submitted to us for pre-approval.</p>

<p><u>Avian Living Conditions § 205.241</u></p>	<p>As stated for mammalian livestock, living conditions for organic livestock are meant to accommodate the wellbeing and natural behavior of animals, including birds. The NOP defines the indoor space requirements for each type of poultry, including access to the outdoors. Access to outdoors space must be provided as outlined in 205.241(c). Specifically for avian livestock, manure must be managed to not contaminate the operation’s environment, and to prevent ammonia levels from rising above 20 ppm.</p>
<p><u>Pasture Practice Standard § 205.240</u></p>	<p>Producers with ruminant livestock must manage their pasture as an organic crop. Pastures must be managed to provide not less than 30% of the dry matter demand for ruminant livestock during the grazing season. Irrigation shall be used, as needed, to promote pasture growth when the operation has irrigation available for use on pasture. Is important that you work with your inspector to schedule your inspection during the grazing season.</p>
<p><u>Transport and Slaughter § 205.242</u></p>	<p>Certified organic livestock operations must follow the NOP’s set requirements when transporting all organic livestock. Transportation includes moving livestock to buyers, to auctions, and to slaughter facilities. Certified organic livestock must be slaughtered in a certified organic processing facility to retain its organic status.</p>
<p><u>Recordkeeping § 205.103</u></p>	<p>The NOP requires growers to maintain records for a minimum of five years. Recordkeeping requirements include livestock production records, sales receipts, input documentation, invoices for purchased feed, equipment cleaning logs, and all other records necessary to document compliance with the regulations.</p>
<p><u>Organic Integrity §205.272</u></p>	<p>The organic operation must prevent the commingling of organic and nonorganic products and protect organic products from contact with prohibited substances. These measures must be described in the Organic System Plan (OSP).</p>

This document is a **general summary** of the NOP regulations. It is **not** intended as a substitute for a complete reading and understanding of the law. More information can be accessed from the National Organic Program [website](#). The full text of the USDA organic standards can be accessed online here: [eCFR 7 Part 205](#).

QCS is a USDA accredited certifying agent. QCS cannot provide consultation services to our clients, other than to ensure that their OSP is in compliance with the National Organic Program standards. QCS maintains a list of consultants on [their website](#). Note: it is not required to use an organic consultant and QCS cannot make recommendations on specific consultants.

A Note on Inputs: The National List & Material Review Organizations

Many new organic producers are anxious to use only approved substances on their operations - with good reason! The National List provides information on the individual substances that are allowed and prohibited in organic production. Third party, independent institutions known as material review organizations (MRO) are responsible for auditing branded products for compliance with the National List.

QCS recognizes four MROs: Organic Material Review Institute ([OMRI](#)), California Department of Food and Agriculture ([CDFA](#)), Pennsylvania Certified Organic ([PCO](#)), and Washington State Department of Agriculture ([WSDA](#)).

Always confirm that an input is approved for organic production **prior** to use by calling Quality Certification Services at 352-377-0133 and speaking with your certification reviewer or updating your inputs in your Client Portal.

Documents Required at Inspection

Please note: this is not an exhaustive list and additional documents may be requested by your inspector.

1. A copy of your up-to-date organic livestock plan and attachments
2. Up-to-date livestock list including calving or purchase records and sales records, as applicable
3. Grazing, feeding, and DMI records, as applicable
4. Feed & roughage production and/or purchase records (with supplier certificates)
5. Herd/flock healthcare records
6. Input purchase and use records
7. Milk/eggs/meat/etc production and sales records, as applicable
8. Up-to-date farm and facility map
9. If running a split operation, conventional production records may be requested as a part of the audit process
10. Any other records which may be needed to verify compliance with the National Organic Program
11. Documentation of calculations pertaining to most recently completed QCS Gross Sales Assessment

*While we'll typically be reviewing records pertaining to the current and preceding year, please be aware that NOP regulations require that records be maintained for not less than 5 years beyond their creation.

Additional Resources

[QCS's Frequently Asked Questions](#) - answers to general questions about certification.

[QCS's External Resource Page](#) - links to external education and resources.

[Florida Organic Growers \(FOG\)](#) - FOG provides resources to organic growers in Florida and beyond.

[Organic Materials Review Institute \(OMRI\)](#) - an MRO with a wide array of products approved for use in organics.

[National Sustainable Agriculture Service \(NRCS\)](#) - A USDA offices offering conservation solutions so agricultural producers can protect natural resources and feed a growing world.

[USDA Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education \(SARE\)](#) - Farmer-driven innovations in agriculture that improve profitability, stewardship and quality of life.

[Rodale Institute](#) - A non-profit that focuses on research, farmer training, and consumer education.

[USDA Transition to Organic Partnership Program \(TOPP\)](#) - Resources for producers seeking to transition to organic production practices.

[National Center for Appropriate Technology](#): A national service that provides technical assistance, learning opportunities, and research to operators across the agricultural industry.

[Organic Trade Association](#) - A national members-based trade organization that provides resources to organic producers and advocates for organics at a national level.

[Organic Certification Cost Share Program](#) - Organic operators based in the US can apply for cost share reimbursement for 75%, up to \$750, for organic certification costs incurred from October of the previous year to September of the current year.