FACTSHEET
OLPS

ORGANIC FARMERS ASSOCIATION

2023

ORGANIC LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY STANDARDS (OLPS)

ISSUE OVERVIEW:

New rules for organic livestock and poultry have arrived. This addition of animal welfare focused rules to the organic regulations should result in marketplace recognition that organic certification includes humane treatment with no need for a secondary humane certification for organic livestock products.

PROHIBITED

Physical alterations or activities

- De-beaking
- De-snooding
- Dubbing (comb removal)
- Caponization
- Toe clipping of chickens or turkeys
- Mulesing of sheep
- Forced molting of birds or withdrawal of feed to induce molting
- Total confinement of poultry indoors
- Seriously crippled and non-ambulatory animals being transported for sale or slaughter
- Tail docking, wattling and face branding of cattle
- Gestation or farrowing crates for swine
- Flat decks or piglet cages

ALLOWED

Physical alterations (only within these parameters)

- Beak trimming before 10 days of age
- Sheep tail docking no shorter than the distal end of the caudal fold
- No routine needle teeth clipping or tail docking of piglets

Note: All organic operations need to meet these rules on Jan. 2, 2025 with few exceptions that can be found on the last page.

NEW REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

- Must monitor and record herd or flock for animals suffering lameness and the causes
- Must record all sick and injured animals and their treatments
- Must have a parasite control plan to minimize internal parasites in livestock (includes preventative measures, such as fecal monitoring, pasture management and measures to be used in case of a parasite outbreak)
- Must document weekly ammonia monitoring in poultry houses
- Must document all temporary confinement of poultry
- Must have written plan for prompt, humane euthanasia for animals suffering irreversible disease or injury
- For transport, must identify all animals as organic, and have plan for humane, organic management if transport exceeds eight hours
- Must have an emergency plan to address animal welfare problems during transport



ORGANIC LIVESTOCK AND POULTRY STANDARDS (OLPS)

MAMMAL LIVING CONDITIONS

- Adult and young stock: Sufficient space to lie down, turn around, stand and stretch, with bedding so animals are clean, dry and free of lesions
- Dairy young stock: Can be housed in individual pens until completion of weaning process; each animal must see, smell and hear other animals
- Swine must be group housed except during farrowing and suckling or if there are multiple documented instances of aggression, or recovery from illness
- Rooting materials must be provided for swine
- Outdoor space must be provided year-round, and when soil is required for that species vegetative cover must be maintained appropriate to the season, climate, geography, livestock species, and stage of production

TEMPORARY CONFINEMENT OF MAMMALS

- Only long enough to perform natural or artificial insemination
- Not allowed to be confined to observe estrus or after breeding to confirm pregnancy

FEED

Milk from animals undergoing treatment with synthetic items allowed in the organic regulations with a withdrawal time, cannot be sold as organic. The milk can be fed to calves on that operation and those calves maintain their organic status.

TRANSPORTATION & SLAUGHTER

- Calves must have a dry navel cord and walk without human assistance during transport or sale
- Transportation must have appropriate bedding (except poultry), ventilation, arrangements for water and organic feed if transport exceeds 12 hours
- For all species, must meet humane handling and slaughter requirements of the U.S. code
- If poultry slaughter entity is exempt from Poultry Products Inspection Act (slaughter under 1000 birds they produced per year), they still must not shackle or hang lame birds by their legs, birds must be stunned prior to exsanguination (with exception for religious slaughter) and all birds must be irreversibly insensible before entering the scalding tank



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LIVING CONDITIONS FOR AVIAN SPECIES

Physical alterations or activities

Year-round access to the outdoors is required, except birds can be temporarily denied access to the outdoors:

- When outdoor air temperatures are under 32 °F and over 90° F
- Broilers for the first four weeks of life
- Pullets for the first 16 weeks of life
- All other species of birds temporarily until fully feathered
- When the health, safety or well-being of the animal could be jeopardized as well as risk to soil or water quality
- For sorting and shipping, treatment of illness/injury
- For nest box training, but shall not be confined longer than needed and must not exceed more than five weeks over the life of the bird
- Cannot confine poultry indoors when re-seeding outdoor access areas

OUTDOOR AREAS

- Porches are not part of the outdoor stocking density square footage unless the birds can freely access the other outdoor areas and the porches do not have any walls or screens
- Must have 1 linear foot of exit area per 360 birds, or prove that all birds have ready access to the outdoors
- Birds must be encouraged at an early age, and be trained, to go outdoors. Shade may be provided
- At least 75% of the outdoor space must be soil and must include vegetative cover appropriate for the season, climate, geography and species

INDOOR HOUSING

Must be sufficiently spacious to allow for wing stretching and other natural behaviors and:

- Must have indoor areas that allow for scratching and dust bathing
- Dry litter must be provided and maintained
- Six inches of perch space for each bird. (floors in slatted/mesh floor housing can't be counted)
- Houses with slatted/mesh floors must have 15% minimum solid floor area with litter for dust bathing
- Ammonia monitored weekly at the height of the birds' heads, must be below 20 PPM. 25 PPM ammonia prohibited
- Can provide up to 16 hours of continuous light, must be lowered gradually to encourage birds to settle for the night
- Artificial light spectrum may not be manipulated to increase feed intake or growth rate
- Porches cannot be considered part of the indoor stocking density square footage unless the birds have access at all times including when temporarily confined indoors



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STOCKING DENSITIES FOR POULTRY

Indoor stocking densities for poultry	
Mobile housing	Not to exceed 4.5 pounds of bird weight per sq ft or at least 1.5 sq ft per bird
Aviary housing	Not to exceed 4.5 pounds of bird weight per sq ft or at least 1.5 sq ft per bird
Slatted/mesh floor housing	Not to exceed 3.75 pounds of bird weight per sq ft or at least 1.8 sq ft per bird
Floor litter housing	Not to exceed 3.0 pounds of bird weight per sq ft or at least 2.2 sq ft per bird
Other housing	Not to exceed 2.25 pounds of bird weight per sq ft or at least 3.0 sq ft per bird
Pullet housing	Not to exceed 3.0 pounds of bird weight per sq ft or at least 1.7 sq ft per bird
Broiler housing	Not to exceed 5 pounds of bird weight per sq ft or at least 2.0 sq ft per bird
Outdoor stocking densities for poultry	
Laying hens	No less than one sq ft per 2.25 pounds of bird or 3 sq ft per bird
Pullets	No less than one sq ft per 3 pounds of bird or 1.7 sq ft per bird
Broilers	No less than one sq ft per 5 pounds of bird or 2 sq ft per bird

IMPLEMENTATION:

These rules will need to be followed by all certified organic operations on **January 2, 2025** except:

- Laying and broiler operations certified before January 2024 have until January 2, 2029 to meet the outdoor access, exit door, soil with vegetation and outdoor stocking density requirements.
- Broiler operations certified before January 2024 have until January 2, 2029, to meet the indoor stocking density rules.

Need More Info?

Contact the Farmers Services Team at the Organic Farmers Association

Farmer HelpLine:
(833) 724-3834

helpline@organicfarmersassociation.org

United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
National Organic Program
Transition to Organic Partnership Program