



Guidelines for Certification of Organic Eggs and Meat Birds

Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF)

**Northeast Organic Farming Association
of Vermont (NOFA-VT)**

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Organic Livestock Production

In the context of a farm as a living organism, animals can play an important role in establishing and maintaining vital, biologically active, mineralized soils. Organic livestock production seeks to balance the quality of healthy animal life with commercial livestock production through management of the building blocks of animal health without dependence on medical and chemical intervention. The building blocks of animal health are habitat, behavior, nutrition and selection. All organic animals on certified organic farms must be managed in accordance with the following standards.

Origin of Livestock (205.236)

Poultry intended for slaughter or egg production must be under continuous organic management beginning no later than the second day of life.

Accepted

- Day old chicks purchased from a conventional hatchery
- Poultry over one day old purchased from organic sources

Prohibited

- Purchase of chicks from a conventional hatchery that have not been managed organically from the second day of life

Please Note: For producers who want to certify adult layer flocks, the producer must provide the following records: organic grain slips, health or mortality records, estimates of amount of organic grain fed, and number of birds. All records must document organic management from the second day of life to present.

All purchases of organic birds must be accompanied with copies of organic certificates as well as receipts indicating the seller's name, date and number of birds purchased.

Livestock Feed (205.237)

All certified animals must receive 100% certified organic feed. All pastures must also be certified organic. Bedding, if typically consumed by the animal, must also be certified.

The NOP Standards state: Any field or farm parcel from which harvested crops are intended to be sold as organic, have had no prohibited substances applied to it for a period of three years immediately preceding the harvest of the crop.

Example to determine if a field qualifies:

A farmer's last fertilizer application is on May 31, 2005

On May 31, 2006 he (or she) has ended his first transitional year

On May 31, 2007 he (or she) has ended his second transitional year

On May 31, 2008 he (or she) has ended his third transitional year.

This means after May 31, 2008 pastures or crops harvested can be certified organic.

Please refer to the *Guidelines for Certification of Field Crops* for a complete description of the organic standards for crops.

Accepted for feed

- 100% of feed grains and forage, including pastures, managed by organic production practices and if applicable, organically, handled.
- Feed additives and supplements consistent with the National List §205.603. All vitamins and minerals allowed (if FDA approved).

All purchased grain and forages must be certified organic. Any purchased bedding hay/straw must also be certified organic. **You must keep all receipts as documentation of these purchases.** The receipt must state the seller's name, the transaction date and include the amount of product purchased. Purchased hay and forages must also be accompanied by a valid certificate.

All feed supplements, including minerals must be approved by VOF. Antibiotics, GMO derived products, animal by-products and synthetic preservatives are not permitted in any feed products. Be sure that any mineral supplements do not contain prohibited ingredients (such as mineral oil). Agricultural substances in feed supplements (molasses, soy oil, etc.) must be organic.

Prohibited

- Use of animal drugs, including hormones, to promote growth
- Urea or manure added to feed or in feed formulas.
- Direct fed mammalian or poultry by-products such as animal fats and rendered products (does not include fishmeal).
- Providing feed supplements or additives in amounts over what is needed by the livestock for nutrition and health.

Two main sources of Certified Organic poultry grain in Vermont are:

1. Green Mountain Feeds, Bethel, VT – Eric Dutil, 802/234-6278
2. Morrison's Feeds, Barnet, VT – Mike Thresher/Les Morrison, 802/633-4387

Contact the VOF office for a complete list of dealers who offer organic grain in the Northeast and Canada. We can also provide you with a list of certified organic hay and straw for sale in your area.

Housing and Husbandry (205.239)

Housing must provide for adequate ventilation, adequate supply of clean water and proper sanitation. Housing must provide access to the outdoors, shade, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air and direct sunlight year round.

Poultry should have daily outdoor access once they are sufficiently feathered (around 4 weeks old), but may be temporarily confined during inclement weather.

Lumber treated with arsenate or other prohibited substances may not be used in places that come into direct contact with soil or livestock. For example, treated wood should not be used to construct brooder housing where chicks can have direct contact with the wood.

Soil Erosion and Water Quality (205.203)

A farm with erosion or other conservation problems must demonstrate a program which halts and/or corrects the damage to maintain their organic certification. Producers with erosion issues on the farm must submit a written plan along with a timeline for coming into compliance. Assistance is available through the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Farm Service Agency, the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation or the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

A producer must select tillage and cultivation and grazing practices that maintain or improve the physical, chemical and biological condition of the soil and minimize erosion.

Manure must be managed in a manner that does not contribute to contamination of crops, soil or water, by plant nutrients, heavy metals, or pathogenic organisms and optimizes the recycling of nutrients.

Health Care (205.238)

Animal health is the result of ongoing management efforts to create living soils, provide nourishing forage and feeds, and improve the quality of livestock life. Animals must be kept in a healthy, low stress environment that emphasizes prevention. Producers must use preventative health care practices and may only use approved treatments. Poultry producers are not required to keep health records, but cull records should be maintained.

Accepted

- Selecting species and types of livestock suitable to the conditions on their farm and resistant to prevalent diseases and parasites.
- Providing feed sufficient to meet the needs of the animals, including vitamins, minerals, protein and/or amino acids, fatty acids, energy sources, and fiber.
- Establishing appropriate housing, pasture, and sanitation to reduce diseases and parasites.
- Providing animals with the opportunity for exercise, freedom of movement, and reduction of stress.
- Administering vaccines and other veterinary biologics (all allowed).

Prohibited

- Withholding treatment from animals to maintain organic status
- Administering any animal drug in the absence of illness
- Use hormones for promotion of growth of livestock
- Selling, labeling, or representing as organic any animal or animal product that has been treated with antibiotics, a synthetic substance not on the National List, or any prohibited non-synthetic substance.

Egg Washes (205.605)

Due to the porous nature of egg shells, egg cleaners are considered to be food additives and must be on the National List of allowed non-agricultural substances (205.605).

Chlorine solutions used to sanitize eggs, if at levels added over 4ppm, must be followed by clean water rinse at no more than 4ppm residual chlorine levels.

The following egg wash ingredients are allowed for use in organic egg production:

- Sodium hypochlorite
- Potassium hydroxide, sodium hydroxide
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Sodium carbonate
- Peracetic acid (Peroxyacetic acid)

Other additives/ Egg coatings: Mineral oil is not listed on the National List Section 205.605 and therefore may not be used to coat eggs after washing. Organic vegetable oils would be allowed for this purpose.

Slaughter (205.272)

All poultry must be slaughtered according to Vermont State Law. The information below outlines the exemptions for on-farm slaughter. Please see the Vermont Agency of Agriculture website for more information www.vermontagriculture.com/fscp/meatInspection/regulations.html.

Title 6: Agriculture

Chapter 204: Preparation of Livestock and Poultry Products

3312. Inspection; exceptions

§ 3312. Inspection; exceptions

(a) Inspection shall not be provided under this chapter at any establishment for the slaughter of livestock or poultry or the preparation of any livestock products or poultry products which are not intended for use as human food, but these products shall, prior to their offer for sale or transportation in intrastate commerce, unless naturally inedible by humans, be denatured or otherwise identified as prescribed by rules of the secretary to deter their use for human food. These licensed establishments shall be subject to periodic review.

(b) Inspection shall not be required for the slaughter or preparation of poultry products of the producer's own raising on the producer's own farm, whether or not they are intended for use as human food if:

- (1) Fewer than 1,000 birds are slaughtered annually; and
- (2) No birds are offered for sale or transportation in interstate commerce; and
- (3) The poultry products are only sold, as whole birds only, from the farm, at a farmers' market, or to a food restaurant licensed by the commissioner of health, or are for personal use.

(c) All poultry sold at a farmers' market or to a restaurant pursuant to the exemption in subsection (b) of this section shall be labeled with the following information:

- (1) Name of farm and name of producer;
- (2) Address of farm including zip code;
- (3) "Exempt per 6 V.S.A. § 3312(b): NOT INSPECTED." This statement shall be prominently displayed with such conspicuousness (as compared with other words or statements, designs, or devices in the labeling) as to render it likely to be read and understood under customary conditions of purchase and use.
- (4) Safe handling and cooking instructions as follows:
"SAFE HANDLING INSTRUCTIONS:
Keep refrigerated or frozen. Thaw in refrigerator or microwave. Keep raw poultry separate from other foods. Wash working surfaces, including cutting boards, utensils, and hands after touching raw poultry. Cook thoroughly to an internal temperature of at least 165 degrees Fahrenheit maintained for at least 15 seconds. Keep hot foods hot. Refrigerate leftovers immediately or discard."

(d) Any menu item that includes poultry that is exempt under this section shall clearly state the name of the farm from which the poultry was purchased and shall prominently display the words "poultry processed on the farm and not inspected" on the menu in proximity to the menu item. Poultry sold to food restaurants under the exemption in this section shall include a label alerting the purchaser to these labeling requirements.

(e) The poultry producer, upon first selling poultry to a food restaurant, must procure a signed statement from the food restaurant stating that the food restaurant is aware that the poultry is exempted from inspection under subsection (b) of this section, and that the menu of the food restaurant must have the information required by subsection (d) of this section. The poultry producer must keep the signed statement on file as long as the producer is selling poultry to the food restaurant under this section. The poultry producer must have a signed statement on file from each food restaurant to which poultry is sold under this section and an exact copy of each statement, including the name of the producer and the name of the purchasing restaurant shall be forwarded to the department of health. (Added 1985, No. 226 (Adj. Sess.), § 1, eff. June 2, 1986; amended 2003, No. 42, § 2, eff. May 27, 2003; 2007, No. 38, § 8, eff. May 21, 2007.)

Record Keeping (205.103)

Written records must be kept on an ongoing basis. **You will be required to supply a years worth of records when you reapply for certification each year.** Records are essential, as organic certification is about verifying your farming practices to a third party. It is believed that keeping records can help producers improve their management. VOF has record keeping forms available or you can use your own system.

Records that must be kept by poultry producers include:

- Field records with dates and rates of all inputs applied for each field and harvest yields from each field
- Organic grain receipts
- Receipts and certificates for all purchased forages and/or bedding hay/straw
- Sales records

Please refer to the VOF Certification Guidelines book for a more detailed explanation of the National Organic Program Standards. If you have any questions regarding the standards or the application process, please call the office.