



Guidelines for Organic Certification of Organic Poultry

Vermont Organic Farmers, LLC (VOF)

Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont (NOFA-VT)

VOF Office: 802-434-3821 vof@nofavt.org www.nofavt.org

The following guidelines are based on the USDA National Organic Standards. In order to be eligible for organic certification, farms must be in compliance with the following standards.

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

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, 2010

On May 31, 2011 first transitional year has ended

On May 31, 2012 second transitional has ended

On May 31, 2013 third transitional year has ended

This means after May 31, 2013 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).
- Water additives (electrolytes, molasses, cider vinegar, etc.) consistent with the National List §205.603.

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.
- Kitchen scraps and garden compost that is not certified organic.

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. Housing must also provide adequate protection from predators.

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 or portable pens where poultry 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 mortality 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, parasites and predation
- 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).

Water used in direct post-harvest contact for egg or carcass washing is permitted to contain chlorine materials at levels approved by the Food and Drug Administration or the Environmental Protection Agency for such purpose. However, rinsing with potable water that does not exceed the maximum residual disinfectant limit for the chlorine material under the Safe Drinking Water Act (4ppm) must immediately follow this permitted use. 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. Please see the Vermont Agency of Agriculture website for more information: www.vermontagriculture.com/fscp/meatInspection/regulations.html.

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
- Production records
- Mortality 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.