



Organic Policy Statement Animal Feed

REQUIREMENTS OF ANIMAL FEED FOR ORGANIC LIVESTOCK UNDER THE NATIONAL ORGANIC PROGRAM (NOP)

Pertinent NOP rule sections: § 205.237 Livestock Feed; § 205.238 Livestock health care practice standard; § 205.603 Synthetic substances allowed for use in organic livestock production; § 205.103 Recordkeeping by certified operations; and § 205.105 Allowed and prohibited substances, methods, and ingredients in organic production and handling.

Organic livestock producers must provide a feed ration sufficient to meet the nutritional needs of the specific type of livestock in their current stage of production, including vitamins, minerals, protein and/or amino acids, fatty acids, energy sources, and fiber (ruminants). The feed ration must be composed of agricultural products, including pasture and forage.

All agricultural products in the ration must be organically produced. If processing of the product occurs prior to feeding (such as grinding corn at an off-site feed mill or cottonseed meal), the product must meet organic handling requirements as well. If any component of the ration is purchased from an off-farm site, the producer must obtain current organic certificates from all feed suppliers to verify they meet the organic requirements. Failure to do so could lead to loss of organic certification.

Feed additives and supplements are commonly used in a balanced feed ration. It is critical to note that when additives and supplements have agricultural products as carriers, these

agricultural products must be certified organic as well. Examples of these are molasses, carriers (rice hulls, wheat midlings, grain byproducts, etc.), and other agricultural products like alfalfa meal or soy meal. The feed or mineral dealer should be able to provide you with documentation that all agricultural ingredients are organic. If not, the producer will have to contact the original manufacturer of the product to verify all products in the supplement including the carrier meet NOP rule requirements. Salt cannot be certified organic so plain salt is allowed in organic production.

Substances that are not agricultural products are allowed to be used as feed additives provided that these nonsynthetic substances and synthetic substances are allowed under § 205.603. Examples of these are trace minerals and vitamins used for enrichment or fortification provided they are USDA approved.

An organic livestock producer must not:

- Use animal drugs, including hormones, to promote growth;
- Provide feed supplements or additives in amounts above those needed for adequate nutrition and health maintenance for the species at its specific stage of life;
- Feed plastic pellets for roughage;
- Feed formulas containing urea or manure;
- Feed mammalian or poultry slaughter by-products to mammals or poultry; or

- Use feed, feed additives, and feed supplements in violation of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act.

It is important to remember that animal feed cannot contain “excluded methods”. Excluded methods are generally thought of as genetically modified organisms. The definition in the NOP Rule defines excluded methods as:

A variety of methods used to genetically modify organisms or influence their growth and development by means that are not possible under natural conditions or processes and are not considered compatible with organic production. Such methods include cell fusion, microencapsulation and macroencapsulation, and recombinant DNA technology (including gene deletion, gene doubling, introducing a foreign gene, and changing the positions of genes when achieved by recombinant DNA technology). Such methods do not include the use of traditional breeding, conjugation, fermentation, hybridization, in vitro fertilization, or tissue culture.

Today a significant amount of all of the soybeans, corn and cotton grown in the U.S. contain recombinant DNA technology. As these crops are commonly used as feed, all livestock producers must verify the feed they obtain has not been produced using these methods. It must also be verified that yeast, yeast products, and any bacteria products are not a genetically modified organism. This can be done through the purchase of certified organic feed where the producer has current organic certificates. For feed additives or supplements a producer may need to ask for document from the manufacturer to ensure excluded methods were not used.

Other resources for information organic animal feed requirements:

ATTRA - Organic Livestock

<http://www.attra.org/livestock.html>

ATTRA – Organic Livestock Feed Suppliers

http://attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/livestock_feed/

USDA Alternative Farming Systems Information Center – Organic Livestock

Production: A Bibliography

http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/AFSIC_pubs/srb0405bib.htm

USDA Answers to Questions on [NOP]

Standards by NOP Staff (AQSS) -Livestock

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5072067&acct=aqss>

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5069310&acct=AQSS>

Disclaimer: This policy statement is provided as guidance to organic producers/handlers and is not to be used as a substitute for or in place of the National Organic Program rule.