

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION FACT SHEET

Preventative practices are techniques farmers use to avoid livestock health care problems. The organic regulations highlight many commonly used preventative practices including observation of animals, providing appropriate pasture and housing conditions, and recording instances of preventative treatments. Ideally, these practices will prevent or minimize the severity of an illness or infection.

7CFR §205.238 - The USDA organic regulations require that livestock producers use a multi-step approach in dealing with health care issues. An organic producer must be able to demonstrate through records and observable practices that preventative practices were established and maintained prior to the use of any approved materials to treat livestock health care issues.

Step 1 — Prevention

Prevention of a health care issue through a selection of species, adequate nutrition, appropriate housing, pasture conditions (if applicable), sanitation, physical alterations, freedom of movement/exercise, stress minimization and administration of vaccines and other biologics.

Step 2 — Approved Materials

When preventative practices and veterinary biologics are inadequate to prevent sickness, a producer may administer synthetic medications, provided they are allowed on the National List (§205.603).

Step 3 — Prohibited Materials

When approved treatments, including allowed synthetic medications, are inadequate to treat an illness or health condition, a producer may choose to treat animal with a prohibited material. Livestock treated with a prohibited substance must be clearly identified and shall not be sold, labeled, or represented as organically produced.

Organic livestock operations must not withhold treatment from a sick animal to preserve its organic status. All appropriate medications must be used to restore an animal to health when methods acceptable to organic production fail.

Recordkeeping

Your records should be adapted to meet the needs of your particular business and therefore vary based on the complexity and scale of your farm. Health care treatment records must indicate the specific animal treated, the date of treatment, and the complete brand name of the health care product administered. A wall calendar or simple notebook may help ensure your records are kept consistently and offer traceability of all activities.

Preventative pest and disease control measures may include:

Facilities and Environment:

- Biosecurity measures such as boot washing
- Facility control of vector animals like flies and rodents
- Appropriate ventilation with control of dust and ammonia levels
- Sanitation of milking and surgical equipment
- Sanitary bedding, feeding, and loafing areas
- Quarantine of newly purchased, injured, or diseased animals
- Maintaining an appropriate herd size or a closed herd

Pastures and Outdoor Areas:

- Pasture and grazing management
- Multi-species grazing
- Appropriate stocking density
- Adequate shelter, shade, and room for exercise
- Encouraging natural fly predators (bats, predatory wasps, etc.)
- Clean drinking water source

Livestock Management:

- Selection of species, breed, and genetics
- Regular herd checks and veterinarian visits
- Adequate nutrition and mineral supplementation
- Routine hoof trimming
- Vaccines and biologics
- Low-stress handling
- Pre and post milking protocols for teat health
- Monitoring for signs of parasites (fecal sampling)

Additional Resources

ATTRA NCAT Tipsheet: Treatment of Sick or Injured Organic Livestock

<https://attra.ncat.org/product/tipsheet-treatment-of-sick-or-injured-organic-livestock/>

ATTRA NCAT Tipsheet: Organic Approach to Animal Health

<https://attra.ncat.org/product/tipsheet-organic-approach-to-animal-health>

USDA Guide for Organic Livestock Producers

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/GuideForOrganicLivestockProducers.pdf>



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