United States Department of Agriculture

Biosecurity in USDA Organic Poultry Operations

The National Organic Program (NOP), part of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), develops and oversees the USDA organic standards, including standards for organic livestock production.

All certified organic farms and businesses are required to provide living conditions for poultry and livestock that accommodate the health and natural behavior of animals, including year-round access to the outdoors, shade, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air, clean water, and sunlight.

All poultry operations can be impacted by disease if hazards are introduced by people, trucks, water, feed, poultry house exhaust, or equipment from the outside. Effective biosecurity measures are essential whether birds are raised in indoor or outdoor production systems.

Protecting Organic Flocks: Temporary Confinement Allowance

Organic producers are required to ensure their animals' health, safety and well-being is not jeopardized. To this end, the USDA organic regulations allow producers to confine their birds indoors for several specific and justified reasons. These reasons include inclement weather; conditions under which the health, safety, or well-being of the animal could be jeopardized; and risk to soil or water quality.

If birds need to be temporarily confined at any time to protect the health, safety, and welfare of organic flocks, then producers and certifiers work together to determine an appropriate method and duration of confinement, without losing organic certification.

When appropriate due to known risks, AMS sends notifications to organic certifiers underscoring this allowance for temporary confinement and referring them to appropriate resources from the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

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For More On Protecting Organic Poultry from Disease….

The NOP's Handbook, a collection of standard references for certifiers, includes a policy memo titled: "The National Confinement of Poultry Flocks Due to Avian Influenza, or Other Infectious Diseases" (2011)

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Biosecurity for USDA Organic Poultry Operations, continued

The USDA organic regulations also allow other mitigation techniques, including the depopulation of infected flocks when necessary.

Preventative Health Care Practices

The USDA organic regulations also require preventative health care practices for organic livestock. Organic producers may use:

- Vaccines
- Nonlethal physical barriers (e.g., netting and/or electric fencing), management practices (e.g., guard animals and night corrals), or more active means, such as hunting or trapping

Many diseases, such as coccidiosis, often can be controlled by good husbandry practices. Keeping flocks stress-free with good nutrition is the first step in any disease-prevention program.

For More On Outdoor Access for Livestock

The NOP's Handbook also includes a policy memo titled: "Access to the Outdoors for Livestock" (2011). It discusses outdoor access and when confinement may be appropriate.

Other Resources

NOP has developed a series of factsheets covering a variety of topics related to organic production and certification, including:

- Introduction to Organic Practices
- What is Organic Certification?
- Technical and Financial Assistance for Organic Producers
- Making the Transition to Organic Production and Handling
- The Organic Certification Cost Share Program

These factsheets along with many others are available at **www.ams.usda.gov/publications/Fact_Sheets**.

Organic Producers Must Comply with FDA Laws

Organic producers must comply with all Federal regulations, including those related to animal health and food safety. For example, organic producers must comply with U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations on food safety.

The following FDA Guidance for Industry provides information on preventing *Salmonella* Enteritidis in shell eggs: Questions and Answers Regarding the Final Rule, Prevention of *Salmonella* Enteritidis in Shell Eggs During Production, Storage, and Transportation

Resources from APHIS

- Visit the APHIS "Biosecurity for Birds" website to learn about signs of disease and steps to take to protect birds.
- In collaboration with State, academia, and industry, APHIS has created a biosecurity producer self-assessment. Hosted by the U.S. Poultry and Egg Association (uspoultry.org), organic producers may find this a helpful resource.

For more information, write us online or call us at:

www.ams.usda.gov/nop
(202) 720-3252

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