

Summary of Changes For Ruminant Livestock

New Definitions: there are a number of new definitions. These include:

- A variety of physical alterations which are used in animal agriculture;
- Outdoor space must be provided year-round and can include area under a roof as long as it is not enclosed. When the outdoor space includes soil, maximal vegetative cover must be maintained as appropriate for the season, climate, geography, species of livestock and stage of production.
- Establishes “Vegetation” as living plant matter that is anchored in the soil by roots and provides ground cover.

Changes to Livestock Healthcare:

- Many physical alterations prohibited for organic livestock production. For ruminants these include tail docking of cattle, wattling of cattle, face branding of cattle, tail docking of sheep shorter than the distal end of the caudal fold and mulesing of sheep.
- Producers are encouraged to provide pain control materials (such as anesthetics) as allowed on the National List when performing physical alterations.
- Producers must have a comprehensive internal parasite prevention program, including preventative measures such as fecal monitoring and pasture management.
- Producers must have a written euthanasia plan, using the specified allowed methods of euthanasia.
- Producers must keep records of the percent of the herd suffering from lameness and the causes.

Changes to Ruminant Living Conditions:

- Clarification that animals must be kept clean through the use of clean, dry bedding and sufficient shelter, as appropriate for the species.
- Dairy young stock may be individually housed until weaning (from milk to solid food), and must be group-housed after weaning
- Animals may not be confined from the outdoors for the sole reason of observing estrus.

New Standards on Organic Livestock Transport:

- Animals must be fit for transport to auction or slaughter – no sick, lame or injured animals may be transported (except for veterinary care).
- Transport vehicles must provide sufficient season-appropriate ventilation and protection against cold and heat stress.
- Bedding must be provided in livestock trailers.
- Animals must be provided with organic feed and water if their transport time, including all time on the mode of transportation, exceeds 12 hours, and transport must comply with the Federal Twenty-Eight Hour Law. Transport documents must be available to certifying agent or inspectors confirming that travel requirements, including time in transport, are being met.
- Organic producers must have emergency plans in their Organic System Plan to address potential animal welfare problems that might occur during transport.
- Organic producers must provide records of any non-compliant actions during transport and the corrective actions taken to the organic inspector.

New Standards on Organic Slaughter

- Organic mammalian slaughter facilities must be compliant with the Federal Meat Inspection Act (inspected by either a federal or state inspector).
- Organic slaughter facilities must provide records of any non-compliant actions and the corrective actions taken to the organic inspector.

Implementation Period

The final rule will be fully implemented on March 20, 2018 for ruminant livestock. That means that all requirements must be met by that date to continue certification.