

Spring 2016

The Organic Sprout

MOFGA's Newsletter
for Organic Producers

Proposed Changes to Organic Livestock and Poultry Practices

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Changes Planned for Organic Rules

The National Organic Program (NOP) has proposed changes to the rules for certifying organic livestock and poultry.

The new rules are intended to meet consumer expectations and to set clear standards that lead to consistency for producers and certifiers. The proposed rule covers general healthcare practices, physical alterations, living conditions, and animal handling for transport and slaughter. The most sweeping changes are proposed for poultry producers.

The proposal is based on a 2011 National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) recommendation, though there is a long history of NOSB recommendations on these topics dating back to 1994.

Once finalized, producers would have one year to comply with the new rules, except the outdoor space requirements for poultry, which would have to be met in three years for operations new to organic certification, and in five years for certified operations.

We are providing this summary for producers to review and encourage you to provide feedback to the NOP about how these changes might affect your operation.

Physical Alterations

Physical alterations may continue to be performed for animal welfare, but can also be performed for hygiene, identification, and safety.

In addition to minimizing pain and stress, physical alterations must be performed at a

reasonably young age and by a competent person.

Specific practices that will be prohibited:

Cattle: tail docking; wattling; face branding

Poultry: de-beaking; de-snooding; caponization; dubbing; toe trimming of chickens; toe trimming of turkeys (unless with infrared at hatchery); beak trimming after 10 days of age

Hogs: needle teeth trimming limited to top 1/3 of the tooth and may only be performed if other methods to prevent injury failed; tail docking is also restricted to situations where other methods to prevent injury failed

Sheep: mulesing; tail docking shorter than the distal end of the caudal fold

Healthcare Practices

- Feed ration should result in appropriate body condition.
- A comprehensive plan is required to minimize internal parasites, including prevention, management, monitoring, and emergency measures.
- All surgical procedures must be performed as to minimize pain, stress, and suffering using appropriate medications.
- Recording problems and treatments for injured and sick animals in health care records is required.
- Lameness monitoring is required (% of herd or flock suffering and the cause(s)).
- Allowed medications can be used to alleviate pain and suffering in addition to treating illness.
- Prohibits hormone use for reproduction and growth promotion.

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Proposed Changes (cont'd)

Euthanasia added to the rule:

- Requires written plans for prompt, humane euthanasia for sick and injured livestock.
- Prohibits suffocation, blows to the head, and neck crushing.
- The producer must examine an animal to be sure it has expired.

Transport & Slaughter

Animals must be fit for transport:

- Calves have dry navel cord and can walk on their own.
- No sick, injured, weak, disabled, blind, or lame animals.

Transport:

- Season-appropriate transport is required, including ventilation and protection from cold/heat.
- Animals, trailers, and holding facilities must be identified as organic during transport.
- Bedding is required in trailers and stalls (except poultry crates).
- If animals will be on the trailer for more than 12 hours, feed and water must be provided en route (includes loading time, not just moving time).
- Animals must not be confined for transport for more than 28 hours (time loading and unloading is not included).
- Must have plans in place to prevent and address problems that might happen in transport.
- Shipping and/or receiving operations need to include transport plans in their OSP(s).

Slaughter:

- Federal rules regarding slaughter and humane handling during slaughter must be followed and records to demonstrate that must be kept.
- Organic operators exempt from the Poultry Products Inspection Act must ensure that lame birds are not shackled, hung, or carried by their legs. All birds must be stunned prior to exsanguination, and all birds must be irreversibly insensible before scalding.

Make your voice heard:

Your input matters. All comments will be read and considered. It is important to share your thoughts now before the rule is finalized.

Submit comments by postal mail:

Paul Lewis, Ph.D.
 Director, Standards Division
 National Organic Program,
 USDA-AMS-NOP,
 Room 2646-So., Ag Stop 0268,
 1400 Independence Avenue SW
 Washington, DC 20250-0268

Submit comments online: <http://www.regulations.gov> -type NOP-15-06PR In the search bar click "comment now"

(Continued on page 3)



The *Organic Sprout* is back after a 3 year hiatus. Positive feedback and requests for more in-depth features from our organic producers has prompted us to bring the *Sprout* back to the MCS Community. We expect to release the *Sprout* on a regular basis as a sister publication to the Ag Services Newsletter. Please direct any comments, questions and suggestions to certification@mofga.org.

Proposed Changes to Organic Livestock & Poultry Practices (cont'd) Living Conditions

Mammals

Though the proposed rule does not specify stocking densities for mammals, cages are prohibited and all animals must be able to lie down fully, turn around, stand up, fully stretch their limbs without touching their enclosure or other animals, and express normal behaviors.

Housing with stalls must have enough stalls for one per animal. Animals are no longer required to be able to feed all at once as long as there isn't competition for feed and they maintain good body condition.

Housing, pens, runs, equipment, and utensils must be cleaned and disinfected to prevent cross infection and build-up of disease-carrying organisms.

The new rule further defines what outdoor access means. Animals must be out from under a roof or walls to be considered outdoors. 50% of the outdoor access space must be soil, except temporarily to protect soil and water quality.

Animals may not be confined to observe estrus. They can only be confined long enough to perform natural or artificial insemination.

Finally, the changes clarify that 4H/FFA facilities do not have to be certified for animals to retain organic status as long as they remain under organic management during these events. Animals sold at non-certified facilities (such as auction barns) lose their organic status.

Additional Considerations

Ruminants:

- The milk from a cow being treated with a substance that requires a withholding period may be fed to her calf.
- Individual pens are only allowed until weaning, after which group housing is required.
- Calves must be able to see, smell, and hear other calves.
- The one week confinement currently allowed at dry off may only be from pasture, not from the outdoors.
- Tie stall barns remain an acceptable form of housing per NOP discussion, but are not explicitly mentioned in the proposed rule.



Swine:

Swine must be group housed, except:

- sows at farrowing and during suckling
- boars
- those with documented instances of aggression
- during recovery from illness

Piglets must not be on flat decks or in piglet cages.

Exercise areas must permit rooting, indoors and out, even during temporary confinement.

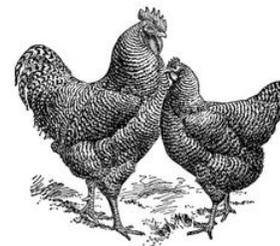


Poultry

Stocking densities are described in pounds of bird per square foot and are the same indoors as outdoors with exceptions for a few types of housing.

Layers = 2.25 lbs Pullets = 3 lbs Meat birds = 5 lbs

Calculations are based on the area birds have access to at a given time. Animals are no longer required to be able to feed all at once as long as there isn't competition for feed and they maintain good body condition. Exceptions for indoor stocking rates: pasture or aviary housing (4.5 lbs.), slatted/mesh floor housing (3.75 lbs.), floor litter housing (3 lbs.).



Required:

- Ability to move freely, engage in natural behaviors, and spread wings.
- Access to dust bathing and scratch areas.
- Dry litter.
- Flat roosts must allow birds to grip with feet.
- Six inches of perch per bird (for birds that perch).
- All birds must be able to perch at once (except in multi level structures, in which case 55% must be able to perch at the same time).
- Flooring: mesh or slatted under drinking areas, slatted/mesh floors must have 30% minimum solid area available with litter to dust bathe without crowding (except pasture housing).
- Housing, pens, runs, equipment, and utensils must be cleaned and disinfected to prevent cross infection and build-up of disease-carrying organisms.
- Enough natural light on sunny days so that inspector can read and write with no artificial light.
- Ammonia monitoring on a monthly basis, at minimum.

Prohibited:

- Forced molting and withdraw of feed to induce molting.
- Ammonia levels above 25 parts per million (ppm) indoors. When levels are between 10 and 25ppm, producer must implement a plan to reduce to below 10ppm.
- Artificial light extending the day beyond 16 hours (lights must be lowered gradually).

Outdoor Access:

- Must provide outdoor access at an early age to train birds to go out.
- Porches are not counted as outdoor space.
- At least 50% of the outdoor access area must be covered by soil.
- Birds must have space to escape from predators/aggressive birds.
- Must have enrichment (vegetation, etc.), and shade.

(Continued on pg 4)

Poultry Conditions, cont'd

Doors Must Be:

- Sufficient and appropriately distributed around the building to ensure all birds have ready outdoor access.
- Large enough for more than one bird at a time.
- Ample enough to allow all birds to exit in an hour.

Temporary confinement allowed, if documented each time:

- 4 weeks for broilers.
- 16 weeks for pullets.
- 2 weeks for nest box training.
- Outside temperatures below 40 or above 90 for the part of day birds were confined (with documentation).
- Avian Influenza (or similar diseases), but the threat alone is not enough to justify confinement. There must be a documented occurrence in the region or migratory path-way.
- 4H/FFA events.

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OEFFA Certified Organic,

Columbus, OH

May 12, 2016



Processing News

by Joan Cheetham, Certification Specialist

Cleaning and Sanitizing Food Contact Surfaces and Equipment in Organic Operations

Cleaning and sanitizing are important components of organic operations. This article will provide a brief overview of a typical cleaning and sanitizing process and the materials allowed under the USDA National Organic Program (NOP). The usual process for cleaning/sanitizing food contact surfaces and equipment is a liquid process and follows this sequence: clean, rinse, sanitize:

1) Clean – Cleaning agents such as soaps or detergents are used to remove dirt, microbes and other residues. Cleaning materials do not need to be approved for organic production. Any cleaner may be used provided that it is disclosed in your organic system plan, approved by MOFGA Certification Services (MCS), and is rinsed from food contact surfaces before organic products are handled.

2) Rinse – A potable water rinse must be sufficient to prevent contamination of organic products with cleaning material residues.

3) Sanitize – Finally, sanitizers are applied to ensure that cleaned surfaces and equipment are free of pathogenic microbes. Typically there is no rinse step following sanitizer use, therefore, there are restrictions on the types of sanitizers allowed in organic production.

The following types of sanitizers appear on the NOP National List (7CFR 205.605) and are therefore allowed in organic operations with no following rinse step:

- Chlorine materials
- Peracetic/peroxyacetic acid
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Phosphoric acid
- Potassium hydroxide
- Sodium hydroxide

Please remember that all sanitizers need to meet the following requirements: (1) The particular product must be approved by MCS prior to use, (2) It must be labeled for the intended commercial use, and, (3)

It must be used according to label instructions. Sanitizers other than those on the above list may be used, provided measures are taken to prevent contact with organic food products. Please contact MCS if you have any questions.

Chlorine Materials - Sodium hypochlorite is the active ingredient in what is commonly known as bleach or chlorine bleach. If using bleach, you must use a product that is labeled for use in commercial food production. Regular household bleach contains surfactants and/or fragrances that are not allowed in organic production. We do allow *Ultra Chlorox Germicidal Bleach (EPA Reg. No. 5813-100/102)*, which is recommended by food safety experts at the University of Maine. It does not have these additional ingredients and is labeled for a variety of commercial sanitizing uses. Inexpensive chlorine test strips are available to check the strength of your chlorine solution before use. Please contact MCS if you have any questions about the use of chlorine materials.

Peracetic or peroxyacetic acid - Peracetic acid leaves no residues and readily breaks down into water, oxygen and acetic acid. It is an environmentally friendly choice for organic producers. Several SaniDate (peracetic/peroxyacetic acid) products are OMRI-listed and therefore allowed for organic production with no following rinse step.

Please contact MCS when developing or changing your organic production cleaning and sanitizing protocols. We can also direct you to University of Maine and Maine Dept. of Agriculture experts who can provide additional guidance. *If a sanitizer is not OMRI-listed then MCS must review it before you use it. This is necessary as products sometimes contain inert ingredients that are not listed on the label, yet may present a contamination risk to organic integrity.*

Rotation Requirements

for Annual Field Crops Including Corn and Small Grains

by Katy Green, Organic Transitions Coordinator

The National Organic Program Rule (NOP) Section 205.205 "Crop Rotation" applies to corn and other annual field crops, including all annual crops grown for livestock feeds. NOP 205.205 does not leave room for the choice not to rotate. It reads, "The producer must implement a crop rotation". The NOP Rule requires rotation in crops for pest management, soil organic matter maintenance, excess or deficient soil nutrient management and erosion control.

Why rotate? Where corn is the crop year after year, insect pests such as corn rootworm and European corn borer (ECB) may build up and become difficult to manage. Where field crops are fertilized with manure annually, there is a potential for a build up of phosphorus (P) in the soil. This is because manures are typically applied to meet nitrogen (N) requirements and N is typical used by crops or is lost from soil, to a greater extent than phosphorus. Phosphorus at levels greater than 40 lb/A exceeds crop needs and may pose a risk in erodible conditions. According to the Maine Nutrient Management Rules, if P levels exceed 200 lb/A, then the farm would be limited to applied manure equal to P crop removal (not N-based application rate). Erosion may be a problem in certain situations.

On highly erodible sites, the type of corn production is a major factor. All tillage crops result in a net loss of organic matter. Continuous corn can be potentially destructive to soil structure and organic matter content. To a great extent, this also depends on the type of corn. Corn silage harvest leaves nearly no residue and continuous production would be very destructive to the soil. High moisture ear corn, in contrast, leaves 3-5 tons residue per acre (dry matter basis). Weeds such as thistle and yellow rocket can become problematic in soy and small grains when crops are not rotated.

Although the producer must implement a crop rotation, there may be opportunity for a farmer to harvest a corn crop more than one year in a row and still implement practices that are consistent with the rotation requirement. Winter cover crops, or interplanting of cover crops, could be used. The Rule permits all suitable crop rotations including sod, cover crops, green manures and catch crops. Bear in mind that your selection of winter cover crop must be able to grow in order to have an impact. If you harvest your field crop late and are planning to plant that same field crop again early next year, most winter cover crops will not have a chance to grow in our climate. Therefore, we could not accept this planting plan as an adequate crop rotation.

What will MOFGA Certification Services do in cases where crop rotation is not occurring? Farmers that are growing crops such as corn in the same field for more than 2 years in a row will be asked to demonstrate their compliance with NOP 205.205. They will need to show that they are using either winter cover crops, interplanting, green manures or catch crops effectively. Farmers must be prepared to monitor phosphorus and organic matter with annual soil testing. The bottom line is that farmers not annually rotating field crops will need to demonstrate in writing and with supporting documentation (e.g., soil tests) that they are not putting their soil at risk. If documentation is not available, MCS will issue a Notice of Non-Compliance, which is copied to the USDA. If the farmer does not adequately resolve the crop rotation compliance issue within a reasonable amount of time, MCS will proceed with suspension of certification of the crop.

Looking for rotation ideas? We understand that developing a rotation that works for you takes time and is specific to each farm. If you're looking for suggestions we've included a few below. Keep in mind these are just possibilities to consider and are not required. The most important thing you can do if you're experimenting with different rotations is to assess how this will work in your whole farm system and what benefits you'll see



from the addition of cover crops.

Given Maine's climate, getting winter cover crops to establish after corn harvest can be tough. As noted above, it's important to have cover on the fields over the winter for a variety of reasons. Interseeding or overseeding cover crops into corn is an option that may be worth considering. Interseeding after your last cultivation prior to corn leaf-out is how this works best during the growing season. Some crops we've seen in use include:

Red Clover- Red clover will fix nitrogen, suppress weeds and contribute to overall soil health by adding organic matter. It can tolerate shade and may boost biomass growth after the corn is harvested.

Annual Rye- Annual rye is shade tolerant and its root structure allows for it to scavenge for nutrients in the soil profile. It is a heavy feeder and will continue to grow after corn harvest. It will be winter-killed and leave a mat covering the ground. This biomass will add organic matter when tilled in the following spring.

Forage Radish- Forage radish is great at scavenging nutrients and can work well at breaking up a compacted hard pan in the soil. It will winterkill and leave very little residue in the spring.

For additional cover crop characteristics, specifications and approximate planting dates, check out Eric Sideman's *Using Green Manures* fact sheet, which can be downloaded at <http://www.mofga.org/Portals/2/Fact%20Sheets/FS%2010%20Green%20Manures%20web.pdf> or sent directly to you by contacting the MOFGA office.



The How and Why of MCS Product Label Review

by Kate Newkirk, Associate Director of Processing

MCS needs to review and approve all organic labels that a certified organic producer uses. We review labels according to NOP Rule Subpart D (205.300-205.311) which describes how organic products are defined and how they can be labeled.

Subpart D first describes the labels allowed based on the organic ingredient composition of the product. Organic ingredient percentage of a product must be calculated by one of the methods described in 205.302.

The first category, '**100% Organic**', means the product has had minimal processing and **contains only 100% Organic** agricultural products. No National List ingredients have been added or used during the processing of products in this category. Some subtle distinctions that remove agricultural products from the '100% Organic' category include the use of a sanitizer in your wash water when rinsing greens or the use of diatomaceous earth to filter maple syrup. Many people assume that if a product contains only organic ingredients it is 100% organic. This is incorrect.

The second category, '**Organic**', means the product **contains 95% or more** organic agricultural ingredients. In this category are products that contain or have been in contact with allowed National List products. The National List products allowed for processed products can be found in sections 205.605 and 205.606 of the NOP Rule. Any product on either of these lists can be used in a product labeled as 'Organic' as long as the total percentage of organic ingredients is greater than 95%. No rounding of the percentage is allowed.

The third category, '**Made with Organic (specified ingredients or food groups)**' means the product **contains 70% or more** organic agricultural ingredients. Again, the same National List products in 205.605 and 205.606 are allowed. There are some subtle distinctions in this category. If the product contains an agricultural ingredient that is not organic and is not listed in 205.606, even if the product composition is greater than 95%, the product must be labeled as 'Made with Organic

(specified ingredients or food groups)'. Local honey is a common agricultural ingredient that occurs in products that are greater than 95% organic but must be labeled 'Made with Organic (specified ingredients or food groups)'. Local *organic* honey is not readily available in Maine due to the required foraging area for the bees (which must be free of the use of prohibited materials).

The fourth category is products with **less than 70%** organically produced ingredients. These products may not make any organic claim and may only list the organic ingredients in the ingredient statement.

The final category is Livestock Feed. **Livestock Feed must be Organic**, as above, or be produced according to 205.237.

The labeling of the above categories is fully described in sections 205.303 for the '100% Organic' and the 'Organic' categories, 205.304 for 'Made with Organic (specified ingredients or food groups)', 205.306 for Livestock Feed and 205.305 for products with less than 70% organic ingredients.

There are three required components that **MUST** be present on the label of a product in the '100% Organic', 'Organic' and 'Made with Organic (specified ingredients or food groups)' categories.

- 1) In the Ingredient Statement, all organic ingredients must be identified as 'Organic' either by name or by a defined symbol.
- 2) Underneath the name of the producer or distributor of the product, the statement: "Certified Organic by MOFGA."
- 3) A lot number that ties the product to the producer's traceability system.

On the 'Made with Organic...' claim on your product you can list up to three ingredients or food groups. The statement itself must use a consistent color and font.

There is one required component that **MUST** be present on a Livestock Feed label.

- 1) Underneath the name of the producer or distributor of the product the statement "Certified Organic by MOFGA".

Note that Livestock Feed must also comply with all applicable Federal and State feed labeling requirements.

Use of the USDA seal or the MOFGA logo is optional on any label. However the USDA seal must not be used on products in the 'Made with Organic ...' category. If both the USDA seal and the MOFGA logo are used, the MOFGA logo must not be more prominent than the USDA seal. Products in the less than 70% organic category or products produced by exempt or excluded operations must not use the USDA seal or the MOFGA logo.

The form of the USDA seal used on an allowed product must conform to either the Black and White seal or the Green/Brown/White seal, where the green color must be PMS color 348 and the brown color must be PMS color 175. The only deviation allowed is the white portion of the Black and White seal may be transparent.

The USDA seal can be downloaded from: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic/organic-seal>



The MOFGA logo may be downloaded from: http://www.mofgacertification.org/?page_id=754



What is Ketosis?

by MCS Staff and Advisors

Ketosis is a metabolic disorder that occurs when cattle have high energy demands (e.g. high milk production) that exceeds energy intake. Most cases of clinical ketosis occur within the first two weeks after calving. The cow begins to metabolize fat stores, leading to elevated ketone levels. Ketotic cows often have low blood sugar concentrations and a characteristic "sweet breath."

Cases of clinical ketosis may occur in cows at freshening, but subclinical ketosis can be prevalent in up to 40% of the herd in the first 60 days in milk. It is suggested that cows giving birth to twins, having retained placenta, or with milk fever are at increased risk for ketosis.

Suggested reading on ketosis:

For a very good technical article, American Association of Bovine Practitioners:

<https://www.vetmed.wisc.edu/dms/fapm/fapmtools/2nutr/ketosis.pdf>

eXtension

<http://articles.extension.org/pages/70310/minimizing-the-risk-for-ketosis-in-dairy-herds>

Merck Vet Manual http://www.merck-vetmanual.com/mvm/metabolic_disorders/ketosis_in_cattle/overview_of_ketosis_in_cattle.html

What can organic farmers do?

In organic production, it is important to minimize the risk of ketosis. However, if treatment is necessary, there are options for the organic producer.

Organic approved prevention:

- Maintain dry matter intake for cows in the last week of gestation
- Freshen cows with a body score of 3.5. Cattle freshening with a body score of 4.0 or above are at risk
- Include some long-stemmed dry hay in the ration

Organic approved treatments:

- IV electrolytes
- IV glucose
- IV dextrose
- Homeopathic Lycopodium, Chelidonium, Nux vomica, or Phosphorus (depending on symptoms)
- Ketonic (Agri-Dynamics)
- Dyna-Vites (Agri-Dynamics)
- Cow Quench (Crystal Creek)
- Super Boost (Crystal Creek)
- Wellness Plus drench (Dr. Paul's Lab)
- Liver and Blood Cleaner (Dr. Paul's Lab)
- Molasses as an energy source (must be certified organic for long-term use)
- Niacin boluses
- Vitamin B complex
- 50:50 Molasses and apple cider vinegar mix orally

Prohibited:

- propylene glycol
- glycerin drenches
- Keto "Plus" Gel (Durvet)
- Keto-Treat (IBA)
- AgriLabs Keto Plus Gel (Bomac Vets Plus)
- glucocorticoid injections
- calcium propionate
- Monensin

MCS Advisory Committee Meeting Held

The MCS Advisory Committee held its annual meeting on March 23, 2016.

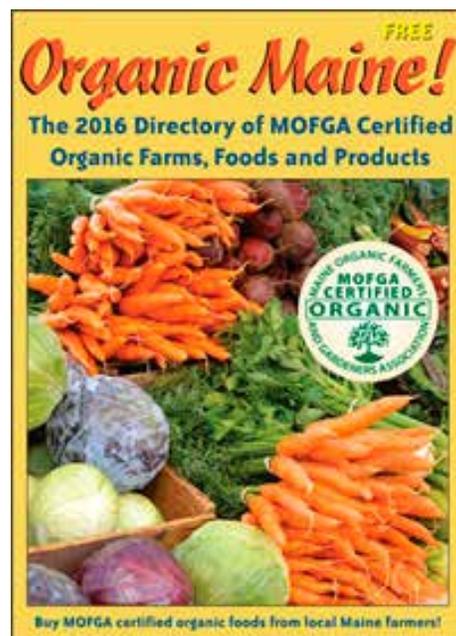
The group, made up of certified farmers and processors, Extension staff, Management Committee members, and Ag. Services colleagues, met with staff to give feedback on issues important to the work of our program.

Agenda items included: goals and objectives for our strategic planning process, sea vegetable production, aquaponics/hydroponics, livestock policy issues, natural resources and biodiversity, maple syrup standards, and administrative recommendations.

If you are interested in becoming part of the Advisory Committee, please contact Jacomijn Schravendes-Gardei at jacomijn@mofga.org.

2016 Organic Maine! is Here!

To get copies for your store, farm stand, local library, etc, call MOFGA at 568-4142. You can download a PDF of the directory from <http://www.mofga.org/Publications/OrganicMaine/tabid/1716/Default.aspx>.



Body Condition Scoring

for Prevention of Ketosis in Dry Cows



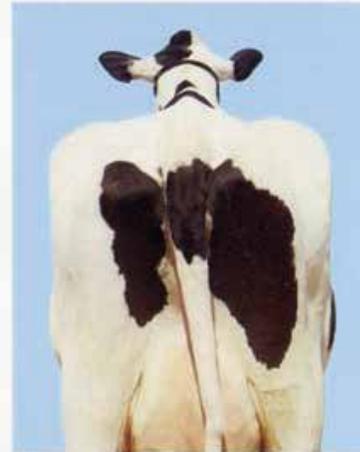
BCS = 1

Deep cavity around tailhead. Bones of pelvis and short ribs sharp and easily felt. No fatty tissue in pelvic or loin area. Deep depression in loin.



BCS = 2

Shallow cavity around tailhead with some fatty tissue lining it and covering pin bones. Pelvis easily felt. Ends of short ribs feel rounded and upper surfaces can be felt with slight pressure. Depression visible in loin area.



BCS = 3

No cavity around tailhead and fatty tissue easily felt over whole area. Pelvis can be felt with slight pressure. Thick layer of tissue covering top of short ribs which can still be felt with pressure. Slight depression in loin area.



BCS = 4

Folds of fatty tissue are seen around tailhead with patches of fat covering pin bones. Pelvis can be felt with firm pressure. Short ribs can no longer be felt. No depression in loin area.



BCS = 5

Tailhead is buried in thick layer of fatty tissue. Pelvic bones cannot be felt even with firm pressure. Short ribs covered with thick layer of fatty tissue.

Elanco Animal Health
A Division of Eli Lilly and Company
Lilly Corporate Center
Indianapolis, Indiana 46285, U.S.A.

ELANCO
ANIMAL HEALTH

AI 7140

Photos by Craig Johnson

<https://www.uaex.edu/publications/pdf/FSA-4008.pdf>

Staff Changes

MCS and Ag Services have had some staffing changes and new positions created since the last issue of the *Sprout* – way back in 2013.

New to MCS....

Kristen Farrell - *Operations Assistant/Inspection Coordinator*. Kristen joined MCS as Operation Assistant in late spring of 2014, replacing Grace Keown, who transferred to the Database Manager position at MOFGA. Since then her role has grown and transformed. Her duties now include coordinating the annual inspection process for our producers, being the voice of the MCS office, responding to inquiries about certification, and wrangling a host of administrative tasks to completion.

Laurah Brown – *Inspector/ Certification Specialist*. Laurah joined MCS as part-time staff Inspector and Specialist in Fall 2015. She brings a wealth of animal and certification knowledge to her role here and particularly enjoys getting her boots on the ground and meeting our farmers and their livestock.

Grace Keown – *Operations Assistant/Information Management*. Grace was the MCS Certification Assistant from 2009-2013. She re-joined MCS as the full-time Operations Assistant/Information Management this past April. Her new role is focused on the development and maintenance of our customized database, facilitating communication between MCS and its constituents, and sharing administrative wrangling duties and tasks with Kristen, including publishing the *Organic Sprout*.

New to Ag Services...

Heather Omand – *Organic Marketing and Business Coordinator*. Heather joined Ag Services in June 2014, filling the vacancy left by Melissa White-Philsbury. Heather assists farms with market research and developing marketing and business plans. She publishes the organic price and marketing and business reports on mofga.org, administers the SNAP CSA program at certified farms, and educates the marketplace about the value of organic certification.



Need Help?

MOFGA's Agricultural Services staff is here to answer your questions and point you in the right direction! We are also available (and love!) to visit farms throughout the year. Need help with your certification paperwork? We can do that too. Don't hesitate to be in touch. All staff members can be reached by calling the MOFGA Office at 207-568-4142, unless otherwise noted.

John Chartier,
Aroostook County Agricultural Services
Phone: 207-521- 1200
jchartier@mofga.org

John serves new and current Aroostook County farmers and processors. If you have a question about dairying, growing grains, hay, or vegetables in Aroostook County, please get in touch with him.

Dave Colson,
Agricultural Services Director
dcolson@mofga.org

Dave has 35 years of experience in farming, primarily vegetable and hoop house production. Farm systems including crop rotations, weed management, soil fertility, crop planning and record keeping are particular areas of expertise.

Katy Green,
Organic Transitions Coordinator
kgreen@mofga.org

Katy connects growers to conservation

and cost-sharing programs for on-farm improvements. Katy also helps growers and processors transition land or products.

Heather Omand,
Organic Marketing and Business Coordinator
homand@mofga.org

Heather assists farms with market research and developing marketing and business plans. She publishes the organic price reports, manages the Low-Income CSA program, and facilitates organic sourcing.

Diane Schivera,
Organic Livestock Specialist
Phone: 207-785-5310
dianes@mofga.org

Diane provides information on livestock management, including: housing, nutrition, pasture management, health care prevention and treatments.

Eric Sideman,
Organic Crops Specialist
Phone: 603-269-6201
esideman@mofga.org

Eric works with farmers to develop soil and pest management plans, crop rotation using green manures and helps solve disease and insect problems. Eric compiles weekly pest reports during the growing season.

CJ Walke,
Organic Orchardist
cjwalke@mofga.org

CJ works with organic fruit tree growers to build orchard health and establish methods of pest and disease control.

Saying Farewell to Mary Yurlina

by MCS Staff

In March, MOFGA Certification Services bid farewell to Mary Yurlina, long time director of MCS.

Mary began working at MCS in 2002. Her initial role included implementation of the then new NOP rule into MOFGA's certification program and streamlining the application process. During her tenure, she went from the lone MCS employee to manager of 7 staff and many contract inspectors. In Mary's words, "Growing the staff has been essential, given both the rise in producer numbers and diversity, and the additional expectations from us by USDA in order to stay accredited". She worked tirelessly with Kate Newkirk to professionalize, and digitize the program. Under her supervision, MCS developed a custom database for managing a huge volume of information. Mary worked with many different management committees. Her final projects at MCS included work on a certification program for medical cannabis and writing a business plan for the organization.

Mary, with a doctorate in ecology and evolution from Rutgers University, has worked in many capacities as an ecologist. Before moving to Maine, she worked with the Akwesasne Mohawks in upstate New York on pollution issues, inventoried and mapped natural areas for the New York City Parks Department, and, during graduate school, worked on large-scale ecological restoration projects in New York and New Jersey, focusing on native bee pollinators. Mary also spent three years at the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis, where she coordinated conservation programs for the Center for Plant Conservation.

Mary's cooking skills are legendary, and her dishes at MOFGA potlucks were highly anticipated. Some MOFGA staff will remember the time she brought in a big sheet cake for a birthday party, which dropped off the back of her truck and was magnificently mashed up. (It still tasted delicious!) Mary usually has some beautiful vegetable entries from her home garden in the Common Ground Country Fair Exhibition Hall.

Mary instituted many "best management practices" that will be used at MCS for years to come. She leaves MOFGA Certification Services on solid ground, with nearly 500 certified clients and a hard-working staff.

As Mary moves on to the next stage of her life, she plans a well-deserved break, and many walks with her dog, Cookie. We know that she will be successful in any endeavor she sets her

mind to, and we fondly wish her the best of luck. We will miss her sharp wit and presence at MOFGA Certification Services. We hope to see her and her veggies again at the Exhibition Hall!

The MCS Management Committee has appointed Kate Newkirk and Jaco Gardei as interim directors. The Committee is dedicated to finding a new director, and will be working this summer to finalize this hire. If you know good candidates for the job, please refer them to MOFGA's website: <http://mofga.org/Contact/EmploymentOpportunities/tabid/367/Default.aspx>.



Photo credit: J. English



Dear Certification Specialist...



I am having some issues with rodents. I would like to use some rodenticides on my certified organic farm, and I am wondering if this is in compliance with the NOP rule?

Sincerely,

Gophers in the Greenhouse

Dear "Gophers,"

Pest Management on a certified organic farm should take a multi-step approach:

- Level A - Prevention/avoidance of the problem is the required first line of defense
- Level B – Use of mechanical and physical controls may be used when level A methods are not enough
- Level C – If level A and B controls have failed, an approved material may be used
- Level D – If control actions A, B and C are not enough to control pests, level D practices may be used. Level D practices include the use of insecticides and rodenticides not on the National List.

Level A: Rodents like to take up residence close to food sources and nesting grounds. Buildings, feed bins, wood piles, junk heaps, and stacked trash are all highly attractive to rodents. Level A methods should be your first line of defense. Prevent rodents from coming to your farm by removing possible habitats, and keeping rodents away from food sources. Physical barriers to food, such as fences, wire baskets, or even trenches and irrigation can be effective.

Level B: The reality is that prevention can only do so much, and many organic farmers rely on trapping for some degree of control. Use of mechanical and physical controls, such as snap traps or electronic traps, may be used when level A methods are not enough. Trapping can be very effective when used with persistence, skill, and the right kind of trap (there are many kinds on

the market). Selection of attractive bait is also important. Rodents go for fish, oatmeal, bacon and sweets. Select a trap location inaccessible to children, livestock, pets and non-target species. Good old fashioned predation is one of the best ways to control rodent populations. Development of habitat for natural enemies of pests, or a good barn cat, also fits this category.

Level C: When Levels A and B have failed, materials on the National List may be used. Natural materials, in general, are allowed. A few, however, such as arsenic and strychnine, are prohibited. Synthetic materials are generally prohibited, with Vitamin D3 as an exception. Vitamin D3 -containing rodenticides produce hypercalcemia, making it an effective poison. Rodents generally die within two days following ingestion and do not appear to exhibit bait shyness. However, care should be used when placing this bait, particularly where dogs and cats are present, both of which may eat it as well. Agrid3 and Terad3 are examples of Vitamin D3 - containing rodenticides that are on the OMRI list. When you have to resort to the use of approved products, you must keep pest control records.

Level D methods may only be used if Levels A, B and C are not enough to control pests. Level D practices include the use of insecticides and rodenticides not on the National List. All materials and methods must be approved by MCS before use, and a protocol must be written to prevent contamination of organic product.

If you have a question that you would like to see answered in the "Dear Certification Specialist" column, send an email to certification@mofga.org.



2016 calendar

Events & Training

june

June 4 - Organic Orchardling Workshop with C.J. Walke. Cultivating Community's

Boyd Street Community Garden, 2 Boyd St., Portland.

June 8 - Farm Training Project Workshop: Organic Livestock Management. Wednesday, 5 p.m., Apple Creek Farm, Bowdoinham.

June 11 - Farm & Homestead Day at MOFGA. Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., MOFGA's Common Ground Education Center, Unity. Learn skills for resilient living through face-to-face, hands-on activities. Nearly all workshops are participatory. Free!

June 11 - Peaceful Mind, Peaceful Heart Herbal Medicine Workshop. 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., with Deb Soule of Avena Botanicals, at Deer Isle Hostel. Cosponsored by MOFGA. FMI: www.deerislehostel.com or 207-348-2308. Accommodation at the hostel: \$25 with communal dinner.

June 11 - Pest & Soil Walk with Hands-On Soil Testing. Led by MOFGA's Eric Sideman and Crystal Spring Farm sheep farmer Tom Settlemire. 10 a.m. to noon, Tom Settlemire Community Garden, Brunswick.

June 16 - Farm Training Project Workshop: Hand Tool Demonstration. Wednesday, 5 p.m., Johnny's Selected Seeds, Albion.

June 29 - Conservation Farm Tour: Cover Crop Demonstration. 4-6 p.m., New Leaf Farm, Durham. Led by Dave Colson, MOFGA's agricultural services director. Learn about types of cover crops, pros and cons and programs for your farm. Cosponsored by MOFGA, the Androscoggin Valley Soil and Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation District. To register and FMI: Katy Green, kgreen@mofga.org, 568-4142.

july

July 6 - Farm Training Project Workshop: Farming with Horses. Wednesday, 5 p.m., Sandy Meadow Farm, Unity.

July 10 to 16 - Tree Fodder Seminar. 3 Streams Farm in Belfast. Presented by Shana Hanson. \$150 suggested tuition covers instruction and room or camp site plus meal in-

redients \$35 and \$55 are suggested tuitions respectively for one and two day options. Payment will be due by 6/30/16. Call (207) 338-3301 FMI and to register.

July 14 - Farm Training Project Workshop: Ecological Weed Management. Wednesday, 5 p.m., Black Kettle Farm, Lyman.

July 20 - Farm Training Project Workshop: Creative & Collaborative Marketing. Wednesday, 5 p.m., Milk & Honey Café, Portland.

July 22-24 - Deepening Our Relationship with Medicine Plants, Plant Spirits & Elemental Beings. Taught by Deb Soule and Mischa Schuler. Spend a weekend in Avena Botanicals' gardens! Call Mischa for more information or to register, 207-274-3242. Camping and 6 organic vegetarian meals provided. Visit www.avenabotanicals.com for more information.

July 28 & 29 - Kneading Conference. Skowhegan Fairgrounds. Keynote speaker will be Amy Halloran, author of «The New Bread Basket.» Information: Erin at erin@maine-grainalliance.com or kneadingconference.com.

July 31 - Spirit: Healing with Flowers and Meditation. 9:30 am to 3:30 pm. Taught by Deb Soule of Avena Botanicals. Come celebrate the healing gifts of flowers. To register call 207-370-4775 or visit www.avenabotanicals.com for more information.

aug

August 2 - Farm Training Project Workshop:

Cut Flower Primer. Tuesday, 5 p.m., Honey-suckle Way, Whitefield.

August 6 - Organic Orchardling Workshop: Bud Grafting. Saturday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., North Branch Farm, Monroe, Maine. Bud grafting is a great way to start your own fruit trees as well as many ornamentals. Join Seth Yentes and practice bud grafting in his nursery plot. \$50 non-members; \$45 Student/Apprentice; \$35 members; Journeypersons free.

August 10 - Farm Training Project Workshop: Ecological Pest Management. Wednesday, 5 p.m., Hatchet Cove Farm, Warren.

August 12-14 - NOFA Summer Conference. UMass Amherst, Mass. 2016 keynote by Dr. Christine Jones, internationally-acclaimed

agricultural educator who will speak about sequestration of carbon and humus development through appropriate agricultural practices.

August 15, 16, 22 and 23 - Maine Accreditation Course in Organic Land Care. University of Southern Maine, Portland. Hosted by NOFA, co-sponsored by MOFGA and others. More Information at <http://www.organiclandcare.net>. Discounts and payment plans.

August 17 - Farm Training Project Workshop: Conservation Practices on a Diversified Farm. Wednesday, 5-7 p.m., Frith Farm, Scarborough.

August 20-21 - Maine Axe and Saw Meet-up. MOFGA's Common Ground Education Center, Unity. Learn about the history, making, use and care of axes, crosscut saws, peaveys and other vintage and modern non-motorized tools. FMI: alexander-soldtools@gmail.com

August 24 - Farm Training Project Workshop: Seed Saving on a Diversified Farm. Wednesday, 5 p.m., Seven Tree Farm, Vassalboro.

sept

September 7 - Farm Training Project Workshop: Raw Land:

What's Your Plan? Wednesday, 5 p.m., Steve Rodrigue's Homestead, Windsor.

September 15 - Slow Money Maine Gathering. 12-4 p.m., Christ Church, Gardiner. Free and open to everyone... entrepreneurs, investors, non-profit representatives. No membership required and all are welcome. www.slowmoneymaine.org

September 15 - Farm Training Project Workshop: Apprentice to Journeyperson. Thursday, 5 p.m., Bumbleroot Farm, Buxton.

