

USDA Announces Final “Access to Pasture” Rule

This is to notify you that the USDA finalized the “Organic Access to Pasture” Rule on 12 February 2010. NB. To be read in conjunction with the notification from the USDA.

Important Points:

1. This rule applies to all ruminant animals certified under USDA NOP.
2. The implementation of this rule is effective from 17 June 2010. Any new farm certified to USDA NOP after this date will need to comply immediately with this rule. However farms already certified to USDA NOP on the effective date will have 12 months to implement the new rule.
3. Dry matter tables have been produced by the USDA for beef and dairy cows, but tables for sheep are unavailable but will be provided in the future.
4. Producers must include a pasture management plan as part of their organic management plan.
5. An initial dry matter intake assessment for each type and class of animal should be calculated at the beginning of the grazing season, and additional calculations should be made when a change occurs.
6. A dry matter intake worksheet is provided by USDA and a separate sheet is required for each livestock class and type.
7. Producers must also maintain pasture and feed records.
8. The final rule is less restrictive on the feed documentation requirements than those of the proposed rule both in terms of frequency of documentation and mandating specific formulas for dry matter demand and dry matter intake.
9. Denying pasture to ruminants during periods of inclement weather such as a rain event is not justification to deny access to pasture. A rain event must render the pasture too wet for grazing without causing damage to the pasture beyond normal wear and tear from grazing.
10. The proposed requirement for fencing water bodies has been deleted from the final version.
11. The proposed requirement for a sacrificial paddock has been deleted from the final version.
12. Further information is available on the USDA website www.ams.usda.gov search on “Pasture Rulemaking”.

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Livestock Producers

Organic Livestock Update
Access to Pasture Rule

