## Enhancing Animal Health and Welfare within Organic Livestock Standards:

## A Tiered 5-Step Animal Welfare Rating System Approach

National Organic Standards Board Meeting November 28, 2007

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National Organic Standards Board Member 1995-2000

# Challenges along the path of expanding animal welfare standards/conditions in the National Organic Program

- Heightened consumer demand leads to rapid growth in organic livestock and poultry sectors
- Consumer expectation that organic livestock should reflect the gold standard for animal welfare but what should that standard look like?
- Considerable differences among livestock standards related to animal health and welfare
- Consumer publications report confusion reigns regarding meat, poultry, and dairy labeling
- Livestock producers report uncertainty about creating systems that support an animal's natural needs and, especially how to focus on animal welfare and also make a profit, especially in alternative systems

## UC Berkeley Wellness Letter November 2007:

## "Got a Beef With Your Butcher?"

"Beef labels—even those that are independently or government-certified—are confusing. Don't assume, for example, that "organic" beef comes from animals never confined to feedlots or treated and slaughtered more humanely, or that "natural" or "grass-fed" beef is raised without antibiotics or hormones. "Natural" is not interchangeable with "organic", nor "grass-fed" with "pasture-fed."

If you care about these issues and don't mind paying extra for your meat, you might want to do a little background research."

#### What the labels mean:

"USDA Certified Organic: To meet USDA organic standards, cattle are raised on 100% organic feed, whether grass or grain, that does not contain animal by-products, manure, poultry litter, or plastic pellets and without antibiotics or growth hormones. They must have access to pasture and opportunity to exercise (though what this means is still not specified)."

# Organic Farming Research Foundation 2007 National Organic Research Agenda: Chapter 3: Organic Livestock & Poultry Management Systems Summary of Research Goals: focus on Animal Health & Well-being

- Production challenges persist due to lack of well-funded research efforts targeted at specific animal health care, pasture management, and nutrition issues
- Producers rank animal health care as their highest priority for organic livestock research
- Effective disease controls will require systems-based research on intensive grazing management, good nutrition, and strategic use of supplements and preventative treatment
- Standard, economically viable rations to complement pasture and provide complete nutrition for all species of livestock and poultry within the constraints of the National Organic Standards also need to be developed.
- Breeding programs that emphasize adaptability to organic management systems are needed to enhance animal health and productivity

Benefiting from the experience of Whole Foods Market's meat & poultry quality standards program



2000-2001: work began to move beyond no added growth hormones and no antibiotics to include more emphasis and focus on humane treatment of animals

2003: Initiated Animal Compassionate Standards developmental work process—making Goal A subordinate to Goal B

- Goal A: to maximize the welfare of the animal
- Goal B: to minimize costs and maximize efficiencies

## A complexity of influences affect Animal Welfare

Genetics

**Indoor Environment** 

Outdoor Environment

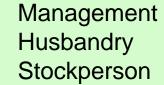
Health

**Group Size** 

**Stocking Density** 

Etc.











## Based on a series of many Animal Compassionate Standards developmental meetings from winter 2003-Spring 2007

- Ducks
- Beef cattle
- Pigs
- Sheep
- Turkeys
- Broiler chickens
- Laying hens
- Dairy cattle, including veal



#### A multi-stakeholder group process

- Animal advocate groups representatives (Humane Society of the U.S., PETA, Animal Welfare Institute, Animal Rights International, Animal Place)
- Whole Foods Market producers
- 3<sup>rd</sup> party auditor representative
- International representation of animal welfare scientists
  - Including Dr. Jim Webster, Dr. Ian Duncan, Dr. Michael Appleby, Dr. Temple Grandin, Dr. Renee Bergeron, Dr. Joe Stookey, etc.
- Whole Foods Market executive leadership, Quality Standards team representatives, national Meat Coordinator, and regional meat coordinators

## Key Insights

 Producers seek support in developing alternative systems that support the natural behavior of livestock

 More research on alternative livestock systems needed.

## Founded January 2005 to fill education & research gaps

Sample Research Funding

- Alternative to castration in pigs
- Breeding short-tailed sheep to eliminate tail docking (New Zealand)
- Pastured poultry-maintaining pond water quality/pasture for ducks/geese, pasture quality/use for turkeys, and regenerating denuded land (Kansas)
- Effects of handling procedures at loading and transport vehicle design on the welfare of pigs (Canada)



- Grazing workshops cover the basics of grass-fed systems
- forage and grass management
- paddock design and fencing
- economics of grassfed production
- integrated livestock systems

## Key Insights

- Need a path for producers to make incremental improvements instead of what may seem like a leap they pre-determine as unattainable and dismiss
- Need a very different concept from all or nothing--either you meet the label/you don't or the producers doing minimal effort are lumped in with seemingly the same equality as those who are outstanding in their care for the animals
- Led to: A system that rates animal production systems on a scale of 1-5, on a species-specific basis as incentive for producers
  - Each step builds upon the standards required for the step previous to it
- Five tiers of detailed information for consumers

### Initiated 2007:

5-Step Animal Welfare Rating Program at Whole Foods Market, Kensington, UK

- •Supports continuous improvement of farm animal welfare-- a <a href="framework">framework</a> for improvement, along with recognition for their efforts
- •Increases opportunities for farm animals to be treated with dignity and respect in conditions that let them express their natural behaviors
- Provides transparency for consumers to be able to make informed buying decisions based on animal welfare considerations

#### LOOK FOR THESE LABELS IN OUR MEAT DEPARTMENT











## Independent Verification & Auditing

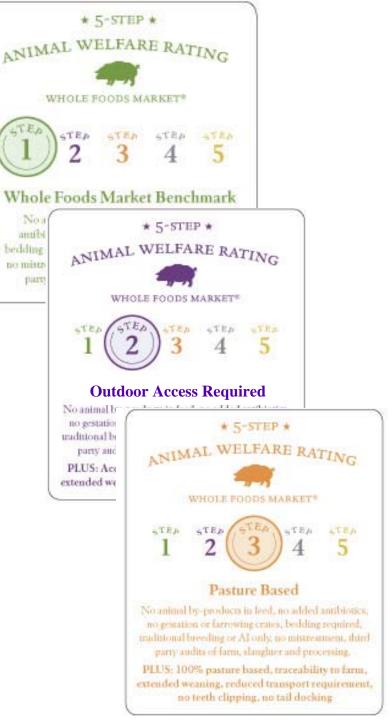
- 2007: USDA Food Safety & Inspection Service approved a label recognizing Whole Foods Market's 5 Step Animal Welfare Rating System
  - Authorized its use by producers verified as meeting the requirements of a particular step or level
- ISO-accredited verification bodies
- Auditors required to undergo specific training how to audit to the 5 Step Animal Welfare Rating program
- Audits of record-keeping, conditions and practices on farm/ranch and at slaughter plant

## 5-Step Animal Welfare Rating

Steps 1 to 3 consist of varying degrees of welfare practices

- · **Step 1**: *Benchmark* Minimum welfare standards
- Step 2: Outdoor Access Required
- · Step 3: Pasture Based

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#### Animal Centered

No animal by-products in feed, no added antibiotics, no gestation or farrowing crates, bedding required, traditional breeding or Al only, no mistreatment, third party audits of farm slanghter and processing.

PLUS: 100% pasture based, traceability to farm, extended weaning, reduced transport requirement,

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#### **Animal Centered Gold Standard**

No animal by-products in feed, no added antibiotics, no gestation or farmwing crates, bedding required, traditional breeding or Al only, no mistreatment, third party andits of farm, changlater and processing.

PLUS: 100% pasture based, traceability to farm, extended weaning, no teeth clipping, tail docking, nose ringing or defunking, no castration, piglets remain together for life, no transfer from farm, on-farm humane slaughter

## 5-Step Animal Welfare Rating

The top two steps identify standards that qualify for animal compassionate husbandry

- 4th Step: Animal Centered
- 5th Step: Animal Centered Gold Standard

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#### What the standards cover

**Beef cattle** 

Sheep

**Broiler chickens** 

**Turkeys** 

**Ducks** 

**Laying hens** 

**Pigs** 

**Dairy** 

Veal

#### **Pigs**

- Farm Plan and Documentation
- Pest and Predator Control
- Breeding and Source of Livestock
- Animal Health
- Animal Handling
- Animal Management
- Feed and Water
- Outdoor Conditions and Land

**Management** 

- Housing
- Loading, Unloading and

**Transportation** 

#### What the standards cover

#### **Poultry**

- Farm Plan and Documentation
- Pest and Predator Control
- Breeding and Source of Poultry
- Poultry Health
- Hatchery
- Poultry Management
- Feed and Water
- Outdoor Conditions
- Housing Requirements
- Catching and Handling
- Transport

#### Beef, Sheep, Etc.

- Ranch/farm Plan and Documentation
- Pests and Predator Control
- Breeding and Source of Livestock
- Animal Health
- Animal Handling
- Animal Management
- Feed and Water
- Pasture/Range or Lot Conditions and Land Management
- Confinement Conditions
- Loading, Unloading, and Transportation

## Global Animal Partnership™

- Moving from private standards program to independent, global verified labeling program through new global not-for-profit foundation
- Successor to Animal Compassion Foundation
  - Animal welfare education, research, verified labeling program
- Completing intensive re-review of Whole Foods Market's original 5
   Step Animal Welfare Rating standards by Global Animal Partnership
   Standards Review Task Force: animal welfare group representatives,
   farmer/producer representatives, animal welfare scientists, retail
   representative
- Foundation launching early spring 2008

# Consideration of the 5-Step Animal Welfare Rating Program to Organic Livestock Animal Welfare Standards

- Consistent with core organic principles:
- Emphasizes continual improvement by rewarding a higher rating to producers who improve their practices
- Provides greater transparency regarding the treatment of farm animals
- Developed through a multi-stakeholder group process
- Scale-neutral standards but good support of small local producer
- Good extension of Sections205.237-239 in National Organic Standards
- Plus: consumer-tested on organic meat & poultry sold in the UK
  - Opened Kensington store with Step 4 (Animal Centered) lamb, chicken, beef, and pork and Step 3 ducks and veal