

Enhancing Animal Health and Welfare within Organic Livestock Standards:

A Tiered 5-Step Animal Welfare Rating System Approach

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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.

**ANIMAL
WELFARE**

Management

Husbandry

Stockperson



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
- 3rd 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

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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)



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- Grazing workshops cover the basics of grass-fed systems
- forage and grass management
 - paddock design and fencing
 - economics of grass-fed 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 framework 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**

WHOLE FOODS. WHOLE PEOPLE. WHOLE PLANET.™

★ 5-STEP ★

ANIMAL WELFARE RATING



WHOLE FOODS MARKET®

STEP 1 STEP 2 STEP 3 STEP 4 STEP 5

Whole Foods Market Benchmark

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

PLUS: 100% pasture based, traceability to farm, extended weaning, reduced transport requirement, no teeth clipping, no tail docking

★ 5-STEP ★

ANIMAL WELFARE RATING



WHOLE FOODS MARKET®

STEP 1 STEP 2 STEP 3 STEP 4 STEP 5

Outdoor Access Required

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

PLUS: Access to outdoor access, extended weaning, reduced transport requirement, no teeth clipping, no tail docking

★ 5-STEP ★

ANIMAL WELFARE RATING



WHOLE FOODS MARKET®

STEP 1 STEP 2 STEP 3 STEP 4 STEP 5

Pasture Based

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

PLUS: 100% pasture based, traceability to farm, extended weaning, reduced transport requirement, no teeth clipping, no tail docking

★ 5-STEP ★

ANIMAL WELFARE RATING



WHOLE FOODS MARKET®

STEP 1
STEP 2
STEP 3
STEP 4
STEP 5

Animal Centered

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

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

★ 5-STEP ★

ANIMAL WELFARE RATING



WHOLE FOODS MARKET®

STEP 1
STEP 2
STEP 3
STEP 4
STEP 5

Animal Centered Gold Standard

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

PLUS: 100% pasture based, traceability to farm, extended weaning, no teeth clipping, tail docking, nose ringing or detusking, 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**

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 Sections 205.237-239 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