



Organic Food Federation

Explanatory Note 318

These notes are intended to help applicants comply with Organic EC Regulation 2092/91. They are not exhaustive and are for explanation only. In cases of doubt the Regulation or the OFF should be consulted.

Poultry Producers

Conversion Land

A derogation exists for poultry which allows the conversion land to be used after one year where land is used for pasturages and open air runs for poultry. In this year, the land is technically in its 2nd year of conversion and the feed from the pasturages and open air runs, must be 2nd year in-conversion feed which is allowed in an organic diet up to 60% dry matter - if from own or a linked unit.

Conversion of Birds

Birds take the following times to convert:

Layers – 6 weeks to convert the birds before they will produce organic eggs. The meat from the bird cannot be sold as organic. Until full poultry rearing standards are in place the rearing birds have to have organic feed and medication from day one.

Table Birds – no conversion. The bird has to be fed and managed from day one in order to sell meat as organic.

Choice of Breed/ Strain

OFF standards state that the choice of breed must take into account the local conditions, vitality and resistance to disease. There are also differences in the age of slaughter for table birds if the breed is an officially DEFRA registered slow growing (see Slaughter dates below).

Sourcing of flocks

Layers – New flocks should be organic however if they cannot be found a derogation should be sought from OFF for using non-organic birds. The non organic birds must not be more than 18 weeks old when they enter an organic unit to start conversion. Please note that any non-organic bird hatched from the 1st January 2006 that is destined for an organic unit must be managed to the organic feed and veterinary medicine regulations.

Table Birds – Chicks for broiler production must be less than three days old when brought onto an organic unit.

Minimum age of slaughter

Species	Age (days)
Chickens	81
Peking ducks	49
Female Muscovy ducks	70
Male Muscovy ducks	84
Mallard ducks	92
Guineafowl	94
Turkeys and Geese	140
Slow Growing Breeds (all species except Peking and Muscovy ducks)	73

Parallel Production

Organic and non-organic production of livestock is allowed on one holding as long as the production is physically, operationally and financially separate.

Non-Organic Stock

Non-organic stock is allowed on organic land under a derogation. This allows them to be on a holding for 120 days per calendar year as long as the stock is from an extensive system and of a different species from that on the holding.

Housing

A poultry house must be a structure with its own dedicated grazing, air space, ventilation, feed and water. The floors must be at least 1/3 solid floor and covered in a suitable scratching material and the birds must have access to a free range area through pop-holes equalling 4 meters per 1000m². The lighting of the building must not be on for longer than a 16hr period.

All birds must have access to free range areas whenever weather permits and this must equal at least one third of their life. The outdoor stocking rate for organic free-range layers in the UK is 10 m² per bird or 1000 birds per ha.

Standards are also set for stocking densities, birds per house perch length and outside range area (see tables below).

Housing Regulations			
	Laying hens	Fattening Poultry (Fixed Housing)	Fattening poultry (Mobile Housing)
Stocking Density (Birds/m²)	6	10 (with a maximum of 21kg live weight)	16(*) (with an maximum of 30kg live weight)
Perch area (cm/bird)	18	20(guinea fowl only)	
Nest area	7 laying hens per nest or for common nests 120 birds per m ²		
Outdoor area (m²/bird)	4 (#)	4 broilers and guinea fowl (#) 4.5 ducks (#) 10 turkey (#) 15 geese (#)	2.5(#)

(*) Mobile housing not exceeding 150m² floor space and which remain open at night)

(#) Provided the limit of 170 kg N/ha is not exceeded.

Species	Birds per House
Meat Chickens	4800
Layers	3000
Guinea Fowl	5200
Female Muscovy or Peking Duck	4000
Male Muscovy or Peking Duck and other ducks	3200
Capons, Geese, Turkey	2500

Feeding- See other guidance notes

Disease Prevention

Health Management of your birds must rely on careful management rather than the use of wormers, vaccines and antibiotics.

Prevention must be the first course of action through

Document No:	Revision No:	Issue Date:	Issued By:	Page No.
318	1	29/08/07	JW	2 of 4

- Selection of the appropriate breeds or strains
- Biosecurity
- Use of high quality feed
- Stocking density
- Rotation of grazing

However if an animal does become ill it must be treated in the interest of animal welfare. The livestock standards state that physiotherapeutic (e.g. plant extracts), homeopathic and trace elements should be used in preference to chemically synthesised products (i.e. wormers, vaccines antibiotics etc). If this does not work chemically synthesised products can be used to avoid suffering and distress under the direction of a vet.

Vaccines

Vaccines should not be needed under organic management however the standards do permit their use where there is a known disease risk. Single or 2 in 1 and 4 in 1 vaccines are preferred to the multiple vaccines that are available.

Parasites

Worms should be controlled through a grazing regime. Wormers are not allowed to be used unless it is justified by Faecal Egg Counts (FEC's). If there are positive results from these then only the affected individuals/ group should be treated. Control of external parasites such as red mite can be controlled if identified. Please ensure that the product to be used is allowed by contacting the OFF office.

Growth Promoters and Hormones

Growth promoters such as antibiotics, coccidiostats etc are not allowed to be used.

Withdrawal Periods of Veterinary Products

These are double the legal withdrawal periods. If there is no withdrawal period or zero then it must be 48hrs. If any products are used in a manner other than that which they are produced then the withdrawal period for eggs and milk is 7 days and for meat it is 28 days. Both the legal withdrawal period and organic withdrawal period must be noted in the veterinary medicine book.

Veterinary and treatment records

All treatments must be recorded with the following information provided

1. Animals treated
2. Product used
3. Diagnosis
4. Method of administration
5. Duration of treatment
6. Legal and organic withdrawal period.

Number of treatments

Any animal or their products cannot be sold as organic if they receive more than three courses of treatments (excluding vaccinations and treatment for parasites) in any one year or production period.

Manure

Organic manure that has been produced on the holding must go onto organic land at a rate not exceeding a rate of 170kgN/ha. For this calculation the farm's pasture area is counted as organic land as it is assumed that a certain amount of manure is dropping on the pasture. The extra land required can either be on the same holding (ideally organic arable crops for chicken feed) or sold to another organic producer whose details must be on record at the inspections. It can also go to organic mushroom producers but NOT on conventional land. This is because organics promotes a closed system were the fertility is circulated within that system.

Document No:	Revision No:	Issue Date:	Issued By:	Page No.
318	1	29/08/07	JW	3 of 4

31 Turbine Way, EcoTech Business Park, Swaffham, Norfolk PE37 7XD United Kingdom
Tel +44(0)1760 720444 Fax:+44(0)1760 720790 info@orgfoodfed.com web site: www.orgfoodfed.com

Document No:	Revision No:	Issue Date:	Issued By:	Page No.
318	1	29/08/07	JW	4 of 4