



# Tip Sheet for the National Organic Program's (NOP) Pasture Rule

Farmers and ranchers with USDA certified organic livestock need to meet the NOP's requirements, including the Pasture Rule. These standards are consistent across the country so that all farmers and certifiers follow the same rules. The Pasture Rule also ensures consumers that organic livestock are enjoying pasture throughout the grazing season. Here are some tips to better understand and encourage compliance with the Pasture Rule.

## ORGANIC PASTURE REQUIREMENTS FOR RUMINANTS



### 1. MEET ALL LAND REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFIED ORGANIC LAND

Organic livestock farmers and ranchers should have a Pasture Management Plan. This plan includes details such as the plant species on pasture, length of grazing season, and erosion control practices. Remember, good pasture management can improve productivity for both pasture and livestock.



### 2. MAINTAIN ACCESS TO PASTURE THROUGHOUT THE GRAZING SEASON

The grazing season is highly variable from farm to farm. Depending on the region's climate (like rainfall and frost-free days) and farm's grazing practices, the grazing season will range from 120 to 365 days per year. Farmers should be consistent with what others are doing in the area or provide justification for fewer days on pasture. **Whether continuous or not, ruminants must be on pasture at least 120 days of the year.**



### 3. ALLOW YEAR-ROUND ACCESS TO THE OUTDOORS

Although year-round access to the outdoors is required, it is perfectly okay for farmers to:

- temporarily confine livestock (such as during inclement weather or health care procedures)
- supplement diets with certified organic hay, grain, and other agricultural products, as needed
- provide trace minerals and vitamins, as needed



DMI NEEDS

=

ENVIRONMENT

+

QUALITY OF  
FEED

+

TYPE OF  
ANIMAL

#### 4. FOLLOW DRY MATTER INTAKE (DMI) REQUIREMENTS

Ruminants must get at least 30% DMI from pasture during the year\*. DMI needs are dependent on the environment (climate), quality of feed (availability of forage), and type of animal (size and stage of life).

\*One exception to this requirement is that ruminant slaughter stock are exempt from the 30% DMI requirement during the finishing period. During this time, they may be fed a high-concentrate diet in a feedlot outside of the grazing season, as long as they:

- continue to have access to pasture during the grazing season
- are not crowded or experience competition for food
- are confined only up to 120 days, or 1/5 of their lives, whichever is shorter

To calculate the DMI, use these helpful forms:

- [Documentation Forms for Organic Crop and Livestock Producers](#)
- [Calculating DMI from Pasture](#)
- [Single Ration DMI Calculation Worksheet](#)

For more information about the Pasture Rule:

- [Organic Livestock Requirements](#)
- [Pasture for Organic Ruminant Livestock](#)
- [How's and the Why's of the Pasture Rule](#)

#### DMI CALCULATION TIPS

- DMI is the amount of feed an animal consumes per day on a moisture-free basis. It estimates nutrient intake so that diets can be properly formulated for each animal.
- DMI is calculated as an average over the entire grazing season. Since the grazing season does not need to be continuous, the farmer can maximize pasture during favorable conditions and adjust, as needed, during poor growing conditions.
- Accurate estimates must be calculated for each type of animal and for each ration period (such as spring vs summer vs fall).
- Farmers need to record details like when each group of animals start grazing, how much feed is from other sources, dates they are unable to graze, and whenever a significant change in the ration occurs. If farmers barely meet the minimum pasture requirements, additional documentation may be required by their certifier.