

ORGANIC LIVESTOCK & POULTRY STANDARDS (OLPS) 2023 FINAL RULE

On October 25, 2023, the USDA National Organic Program announced the [Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards \(OLPS\) Final Rule](#) to strengthen organic animal welfare standards. Set to publish November 2, 2023, the rule will be effective January 2, 2024, with compliance for most requirements effective January 2, 2025. Currently, certified poultry operations have four additional years to comply with outdoor spacing requirements for layers, indoor and outdoor stocking density requirements for broilers, and exit area requirements for layers and broilers. All operations will need to be in full compliance with all provisions by January 2, 2029.

The OLPS rule clarifies the production standards of avian and mammalian livestock as authorized by the Organic Foods Production Act to support consistent enforcement across producers and alleviate market failure by assuring consumers that USDA-certified organic livestock products meet a strong, uniform standard. In line with OTA’s comments and lawsuit, AMS concluded the OLPS rule will bring a net benefit to the sector and increase its net benefits estimates by 3-5x the net benefits estimated in the proposed rule.

The final rule outlines consistent standards across six key areas and, with only one exception, reflects the comments and recommended revisions submitted by OTA in response to the proposed rule published in August 2022.

COMPLIANCE DATES

	Time from January 2, 2024, Effective Date
All Provisions - except for avian requirements detailed below	1 Year
Outdoor spacing requirements for layers	5 Years
Indoor and outdoor stocking density requirements for broilers	5 Years
Exit area requirements for layers and broilers	5 Years

SUMMARY OF KEY PROVISIONS

1. Outdoor space requirements

- Poultry must have year-round access to outdoor space and may only be confined temporarily in limited situations.
- Enclosed porches are not considered outdoor space.
- Outdoor space is the area outside an enclosed housing structure and must be at least 75 percent soil and include vegetation to the degree possible.

2. Indoor and outdoor living conditions

- Poultry must have sufficient space to move freely, stretch both wings simultaneously, stand normally, and engage in natural behaviors.
- Poultry must have exit areas to provide ready access to the outdoors.
- Ammonia levels must be monitored weekly and be maintained below 20ppm. Ammonia cannot exceed 25 ppm.
- Mammalian species must have shelter that allows for animals to move, stretch, and express natural behaviors.
- Animals must have outdoor access year-round, with species-specific

requirements for swine.

- Allows temporary exemptions for certain rules to allow organic birds to participate in 4-H, National FFA Organization and other youth projects.

3. Poultry stocking densities

- Operations are able to calculate stocking density on a per bird or per lbs. basis – whichever makes more sense for their operation.
- Indoor and outdoor stocking densities in the final rule parallel those in the proposed rule and are supported by OTA with one exception. For indoor stocking of broilers, OTA supported a maximum of six pounds of bird per sq ft to align with third-party animal welfare certification. The final rule specifies 5 pounds of bird per sq ft.
- While the stocking density didn't change, the date of compliance for broilers was extended for the proposed three-year implementation period to a five-year implementation period giving these operations more time to come into compliance.

4. Preventative health care practices

- Producers must maintain preventative health care practices that include sufficient nutrition and a plan to prevent parasites.
- Animals must be treated with allowed medicines to minimize pain, stress, and suffering. Necessary treatments must be administered even if an animal loses its organic status.

5. Physical alterations and euthanasia

- Certain physical alterations are prohibited or restricted.
- Euthanasia is required to reduce suffering or irreversibly sick or disabled livestock.

6. Transport, handling, and slaughter

- Animals being transported must be clearly identified and able to walk.
- Animals must be protected from extreme temperatures.
- Humane slaughter standards must be followed.
- Operations must describe how they maintain animal welfare in transit over 8 hours.

CONTACT

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