



ORGANIC ANIMAL WELFARE RULES DO NOT LESSEN PROTECTION OF BIRDS FROM AVIAN FLU OR OTHER BIO-SECURITY HAZARDS

MYTH: Proposed organic animal welfare standards, which clarify that organic poultry have true outside access (as opposed to covered porches), is a wholesale change in policy that puts avian flocks in danger of disease.

FACT #1: Outdoor access is common practice for most organic producers already. Approximately 76% of organic poultry production already comply with the proposed animal welfare standards that require organic flocks to have access to the outside. The proposed changes clarify common organic practice.

FACT #2: USDA Avian health and bio-security precautions remain in effect. USDA already requires organic producers to ensure their animals' health, safety and well-being is not jeopardized. To this end, the USDA organic regulations allow producers to confine their birds indoors for several specific and justified reasons. These include:

- inclement weather;
- conditions under which the health, safety, or well-being of the animal could be jeopardized; and,
- risk to soil or water quality.

If birds need to be confined at any time to protect the health safety and welfare of organic flocks, producers and certifiers work together and USDA's AMS sends notifications to organic certifiers underscoring the allowance for temporary confinement. The proposed rule actually clarifies and codifies that birds may be confined when relevant migratory pathways for wild birds are present, which improves organic producers' ability to mitigate biosecurity risks.

FACT #3: USDA-allowed preventative practices remain in effect. USDA Organic regulation also require preventative health care practices for organic livestock. Organic producers may use:

- vaccines
- nonlethal physical barriers (e.g., netting and or/electric fences, management practices such as guard animals or other active means.

FACT #4: USDA common sense practice allowances continue. The USDA organic regulations also allow other mitigation techniques, including the depopulation of infected flocks when necessary.

FACT #5: Less-stressed birds are healthier birds. USDA contends that "keeping flocks stress-free with good nutrition is the first step in any disease-prevention program." That's organic.

FACT #6: Organic producers will continue to be required to comply with all government regulations, including FDA's food safety rules. Organic producers must comply with all Federal regulations, including those related to animal health and food safety. For example, organic producers must comply with U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations on food safety.

FOR MORE on outdoor access for livestock, please see the USDA National Organic Program biosecurity factsheet entitled: [Biosecurity in USDA Organic Poultry Operations](#), or contact Dr. LeeAnn Thomas, Director of Avian, Swine, and Aquatic Animal Health Center: LeeAnn.Thomas@aphis.usda.gov, (202) 720-2511.