



## CATTLE CORNER

### Traceable Paperwork for Cattle Purchases Q&A

by Katie Webb, Dairy Certification Specialist

One of the most common phone call inquiries I receive is: "I am planning to buy some cattle, what paperwork will I need to show that the animals are certified organic?"

Traceability when purchasing cattle is the goal in your paperwork. This is easy to achieve if the seller and buyer are both attentive to a few details. Here are the important records and reasons for each:

1. Itemized Bill of Sale. This needs to list each individual animal's ID and the seller's information.
2. Organic certificate for the seller. This shows the organic origin of the animals.
3. Health history. This is often missing when cattle are bought and sold. However it is a valid record to request from the seller and will help you show compliance during your next organic inspection when health records are requested.

**Can't we just write the seller's MOFGA certification number on the bill of sale?** In the past, MOFGA Certification Services staff have accepted the certification number, however it was recently decided that we can no longer allow this. There is some risk that the seller's product is not listed on the certificate. It's both the buyer and seller's responsibilities to look at the certificate and make sure the item being sold (in this case, the cattle) is actually certified organic. The certificate will also tell you if the cattle will be eligible for sale as organic beef.

**What if there is a cattle dealer involved?** At this time there is no requirement that cattle transporters hold an organic certificate. However, it has been proposed for the NOP rule and we expect it will be in the future. If the cattle dealer is certified organic, MCS perceives very little risk to the certified organic status of the livestock being transported, since they will understand that any break in organic management of the cattle is not allowed under the NOP.

**What if my cattle dealer is not certified organic?** This scenario raises some concerns regarding continuous organic management of the cattle.

§205.236 Origin of Livestock. (b) *The following are prohibited: (1) Livestock or edible livestock products that are removed from an organic operation and subsequently managed on a nonorganic operation may be not sold, labeled, or represented as organically produced.*

This section of the National Organic Standards means that if the cattle dealer is not certified organic, and they take ownership, transport animals to a non-certified location, or provide any kind of management (e.g. feed during transport), the animals can no longer be considered certified organic.

Additional paperwork may be a good idea to provide transparency to your cattle transaction. You will want to create a document showing that the organic cattle were transported directly from the seller's certified organic farm to your own.

If there is any question in your mind regarding your plan to buy or sell certified organic cattle, feel free to give us a call.

Don't see your question here? Give us a call and we will get you the answers you need. MCS office 207-568-6030 or Katie Webb direct at 207-446-6520.

## ORGANIC CERTIFICATES AND YOUR INSPECTION

by Jacomijn Schraivesande-Gardei, Associate Director of Crops

Organic certificates are an important part of the audit trail and it is common for inspectors to let us know when an operation does not have vendor certificates on file. In addition to a bill of sale, you should collect organic certificates and have them present at your inspection if the following situations apply:

- **When buying in and re-selling organic produce**
- **For all out sourced products used in processing, both for on-farm processors and handlers**
- **When purchasing livestock feed and/or organic animals.**

Every certifier accredited by the USDA issues certificates. The National Organic Program (NOP) certificates must meet the following requirements:

1. The certificate must contain the phrase "NOP" or "USDA organic standards"
2. The certificate should be accompanied by a "profile" or "summary" listing the crops, products, ingredients, services, or brands covered by the certification. This may include international compliances and equivalency arrangements. At MOFGA Certification Services we call this the "product verification."

continued on Page 11