



CATTLE CORNER

Organic Milk ≠ Organic Beef

by Katie Webb, Dairy Certification Specialist

Many people assume that an organic dairy cow would naturally be good for organic beef. However, that is not the case. The organic standards for dairy/milk are slightly different than for slaughter stock/beef. That is why MOFGA Certification Services inspectors are checking records for slaughter eligibility during the annual dairy inspection.

In order to verify the slaughter eligibility of the dairy herd, the organic inspector will be checking to see that health history records are kept for each cow, what types of health care materials are used, and that calving records are complete and traceable for each animal to the last third of its gestation. In other words, the dam and date of birth on an organic farm.

Slaughter eligibility of the organic dairy herd falls into three categories. You will likely see one of the following listings added to your organic product verification this year:

- Dairy cattle for slaughter—some eligible
- Dairy cattle for slaughter—all eligible
- Dairy cattle for slaughter—none eligible

Some eligible. This applies to many dairy farms. Examples include established herds that still contain individuals from the original dairy herd transition, herds with purchased organic cattle that did not come with the ideal paperwork documenting dam and exact date of birth as well as health history records, or, operations that have used ivermectin, moxidectin, or fenbendazole on some individuals animals.

All eligible. This applies to operations where all animals are organic from the last third of gestation. Many closed herds meet this criteria. Additionally, records of the lifetime health history document that the slaughter stock requirements are met indicating that ivermectin, moxidectin, and fenbendazole are not used.

None eligible. An example is an operation that has recently completed the organic transition, or an operation that cannot provide documentation of health treatments over the lifetime of the animal.

If you would like to sell cull dairy animals for organic slaughter, you will need to provide your buyer with a copy

of your organic certificate and any other documentation that he or she may request. If you would like to buy dairy culls for organic beef, we recommend not only requesting the organic certificate but also documentation of the animal's organic status from the last third of gestation (dam and date of birth) and health records.

Relevant sections of the Rule

§205.236 Origin of livestock.

(a) Livestock products that are to be sold, labeled, or represented as organic must be from livestock under continuous organic management from the last third of gestation.

(b)(2) Breeder or dairy stock that has not been under continuous organic management since the last third of gestation may not be sold, labeled, or represented as organic slaughter stock.

c) The producer of an organic livestock operation must maintain records sufficient to preserve the identity of all organically managed animals and edible and nonedible animal products produced on the operation.

§205.603 Synthetic substances allowed for use in organic livestock production.

(a)(17) Parasiticides—Prohibited in slaughter stock, allowed in emergency treatment for dairy and breeder stock when organic system plan-approved preventive management does not prevent infestation. Milk or milk products from a treated animal cannot be labeled as provided for in subpart D of this part for 90 days following treatment. In breeder stock, treatment cannot occur during the last third of gestation if the progeny will be sold as organic and must not be used during the lactation period for breeding stock.

- (i) Fenbendazole (CAS #43210-67-9)—only for use by or on the lawful written order of a licensed veterinarian.
- (ii) Ivermectin (CAS #70288-86-7).
- (iii) Moxidectin (CAS #113507-06-5)—for control of internal parasites only.

Rep. Pingree's Speech at CGCF
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The other issue within this country is organic deception. That's a particularly big concern for us and for a lot of small- to medium-sized farmers. I can't tell you how many dairy farmers talk to me about how carefully they protect the brand every step of the way. Yet [we] see big dairies where questions are raised about whether or not the cows ever get to see a blade of grass. So, when it comes to enforcement and upholding strong standards, we're arguing the same thing at the USDA: that there aren't enough inspectors, that they're not cracking down hard enough. Last year, we know how many complaints and investigations there were, and we also know that not enough of them were reviewed and not enough penalties were assessed. You cannot protect the brand if you don't enforce it, and you can't ask people to work as hard as they do as organic farmers if you're not protecting that brand.... You can't count on consumers to trust a product forever if they start to get worried they're paying for something that isn't true!

The last piece that I'll mention is that... we're fighting for the Organic Livestock Rule (the Organic Animal Welfare Rule). The Organic Livestock [and Poultry Practices] Rule is something we've needed for a long time: to have it clarified in law that an organic chicken has to see daylight—it has to scratch on the ground. An organic cow has to eat grass and lead a life on pasture. You can't mess with these standards and you can't try to claim something as organic when it isn't!

...We need to have more people fighting back...and more consumers keeping an eye on all this, which I know everybody here does. And I just want to say how much I appreciate coming from the state of Maine, where people care deeply about these things. Where they understand the rural economy. Where, however much money they have in their pockets, they do everything they can to buy locally, and to buy [products that are] organically or sustainably grown... Thank you so much for being here, and for taking the time to listen, and I'll look forward to working with you on this, and so many other issues, as we keep up the fight.

