

Dear Certification Specialist...



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This might sound crazy, but I am always a bit nervous for my organic inspection. What are some tips to prepare for my inspection?

Signed,
Nervous Nelly

Most of the preparation needed for an organic inspection can and should be done as you go. Keeping track of inputs, production and sales on paper and filing these documents accordingly as you go will greatly reduce the amount of time needed to prepare for an inspection and the time and stress involved in the inspection itself! However, before your inspection it is a good idea to review and organize to be fully prepared when the time comes.

Here are some tips for having a great inspection experience:

- Review the national organic standards. Be familiar with the sections of the standards that directly apply to your operations. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact your certification specialist.
- Review your organic system plan (OSP). Probably some time has elapsed since you submitted your paperwork to the office so make sure that you review your OSP so that you can note any changes to your inspector. You might want to update some pages of your OSP and have copies of updated pages ready for the inspector.
- Review communications from MCS. Be prepared to demonstrate and provide documentation that you have addressed any requests from MCS.
- Review records since last inspection and organize them so that you can find individual items easily upon request. (Make sure that your records allow you to trace an organic product all the way through your system; seed to sale,

birth to sale, and/or inputs to final product)

- You may also want to take notes during the inspection to refer to later, so make sure to have paper on hand. You will receive a carbon copy of the findings of the exit interview from the inspector.
- Provide a space where you and the inspector can comfortably review records and where you do not disturb the rest of your operation and/or family. While a tailgate may suffice for some operations on a sunny day, a clear table and place to sit out of the wind and weather are preferable. Some inspectors require space for a laptop computer.
- Be prepared to provide easy and prompt access to all fields, buildings, and storage areas, both on- and off-farm. This may include keys to gates and sheds and having other management personnel available. Make sure to have enough gas in your vehicle.
- Make sure to set aside time for the inspection! Be sure that you do not have commitments that will interfere with the inspection. Make prior arrangements for someone else to handle work related tasks and/or family commitments.

Send your questions to Dear Certification Specialist at certification@mofga.org. We would love to respond to them in future columns.

Agrid3 Pellets Prohibited

In the 2016 Spring issue of *The Organic Sprout* we talked about rodent issues and what you can do about them that is allowed under the organic rule. We did mention that the product Agrid3 is allowed after prevention/avoidance and the use of mechanical and physical controls. **Please note that the Agrid3 Pellets have been removed (prohibited) from the OMRI list and should not be used/bought anymore for use on MOFGA Certified organic farms/processing facilities.** The Agrid3 Bait Chunx are still on OMRI and can be used after prevention and mechanical / physical controls are not enough.

The Role of the Inspector in the Certifying Process

There is sometimes confusion within the certification process between the inspectors that come to your farm or operation and the specialists and staff at MCS that make all certification decisions. To clarify, the role of the inspector in the certification process is to verify and collect information. They do not have any additional role in the process beyond those duties. The inspector takes care of the mandated yearly on-site inspection, which verifies that the operation is following their Organic System Plan. The MCS staff will make the final decision regarding the operation's compliance.

The inspector produces a report that is submitted to MCS, which is then used to assess compliance with the NOP standards. The final decision is described in the letter that accompanies the operation's inspection report. If you have any questions regarding the roles of inspectors and MCS Staff in the certification process, please contact your specialist or contact our office: 207-568-6030 or email certification@mofga.org.