

Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards Final Rule Announced

On Wednesday, October 25, 2023, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack previewed the Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards (OLPS) final rule, and USDA published the final rule in the Federal Register on November 2, 2023. OLPS, nearly 20 years in the making, was driven by strong interest from consumers and the organic industry. OLPS becomes effective 60 days after the date of publication in the Federal Register, January 2, 2024, with a one-year implementation period for most provisions of the new rule. The effective date and implementation date have different meanings and implications for producers. Operations will have until the 2025 certification cycle to be fully compliant with the new rule based on these dates. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) does have a longer implementation period for certain provisions, January 2, 2029, concerning indoor and outdoor stocking density requirements and soil and vegetation requirements (depending on whether poultry are layers or broilers).

USDA received more than 40,000 written comments, all of which were carefully reviewed to inform drafting of this final rule. The new rule establishes clear, strong and consistent standards for organic livestock and poultry production, levels the playing field for organic livestock farmers, ranchers and businesses, and promotes fairer, more competitive markets for their products, while providing consumers with more transparency about their purchases.

The final rule outlines more consistent standards for six key areas, including:

- **Outdoor space requirements:** OLPS sets minimum outdoor space requirements for organic poultry and requires ready access to the outdoors. Outdoor areas must be at least 75% soil and include vegetation to the degree possible.
- **Indoor and outdoor living conditions:** Shelters must have sufficient space for livestock to lie down, stand

up, turn around, fully stretch their limbs or wings, and express natural behaviors, such as rooting in pigs and scratching in chickens. Bedding areas must be sufficiently large and comfortable to keep livestock hygienic (for the species), dry and free of lesions.

- **Poultry stocking densities:** The rule sets specific requirements for indoor and outdoor stocking densities to align with advisory board recommendations, third-party animal welfare standards and public comments from organic stakeholders.
- **Preventative health care practices:** Producers must maintain preventative health care practices that include sufficient nutrition and comprehensive parasite prevention plans. Animals must be treated with allowed medicines to minimize pain, stress and suffering. All necessary treatment must be administered, even if the animal loses its organic status.
- **Physical alterations and euthanasia:** Physical alterations are permitted only for identification purposes or the safety of the animals, and certain alterations are prohibited altogether. Alterations must be performed at a young age for the species and in a manner that minimizes the animal's pain and stress. Humane euthanasia may only be used if treatment is not an option.
- **Transport, handling and slaughter:** Operations must describe how organic management and animal welfare will be maintained for transport that exceeds eight hours. Animals must be fit for transport. The mode of transport must be seasonally appropriate to protect livestock from cold or heat. Operations must adhere to USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) humane slaughter standards.

OLPS improves uniformity with regard to animal welfare practice requirements for organic livestock and poultry, promoting their well-being and natural behaviors and supports USDA's ongoing National Organic Program (NOP) mission to protect the integrity of the USDA organic seal and maintain strong consumer confidence in the label. The NOP will oversee the implementation of the rule and will enforce compliance with these new, more consistent standards to support the growth of the organic market. By increasing consumer trust in the organic label by aligning the organic standard with consumers' animal welfare preferences, USDA is helping to deliver greater value to producers and creating a fairer, more competitive and transparent food system.

The OLPS Fact Sheet is included on pages 6-7 of this issue. The final rule will be published in the Federal Register. A preview of the rule is available on the [Agricultural Marketing Service \(AMS\) website](#).





Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards (OLPS) Final Rule

The Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards (OLPS) Final Rule updates the USDA organic regulations (7 CFR part 205) to promote animal welfare and encourage consistent livestock production practices. It adds detailed regulations regarding indoor and outdoor space requirements for avian species, animal health care practices, confinement, transportation, euthanasia, and slaughter.

What Does OLPS Do?

The rule ensures more consistent production and certification practices and bolsters trust in the organic label. The final rule:



Reduces confusion about organic production practices and standards



Establishes species-specific standards for avian species



Clarifies indoor and outdoor space requirements



Strengthens and **clarifies** animal health care regulations

OLPS History + Engagement

Proposed Rule

- Published as proposed rule in August 2022

Public Comment

- 40,336 written comments
- 57,000 petition signatures
- 94% of comments and petitions support the rule



Final Rule

- Policy updated based on public comment

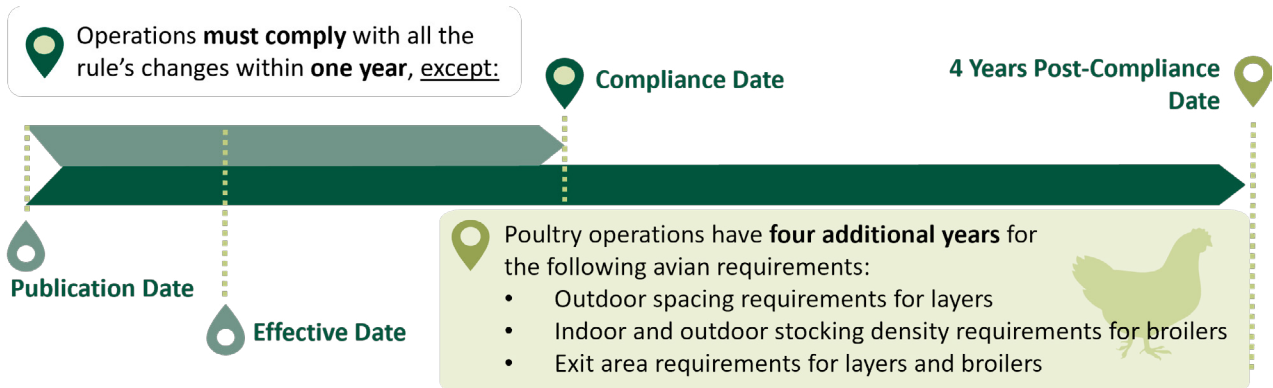
Enforcement

- One year implementation period for most practices, five years for select exceptions

Who is Affected by OLPS?

- USDA accredited certifying agents
- Consumers
- Processing Facilities
- Livestock Producers

When Do I Need to Comply?



<https://www.ams.usda.gov/rules-regulations/organic-livestock-and-poultry-standards>

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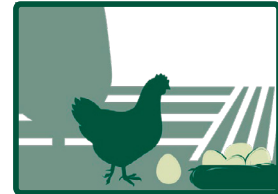


Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards (OLPS) Final Rule Cont.



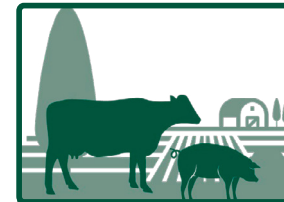
OLPS establishes indoor and outdoor space requirements for avian species

- OLPS sets specific **space and stocking density requirements** for both indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Poultry must have year-round **outdoor access** and may only be confined temporarily in limited situations.
- **Porches** are **prohibited** for use as outdoor space.
- Requires weekly monitoring of **ammonia** in indoor spaces.



OLPS revises production practices for mammals and non-avian species

- **Shelter** must allow for animals to **move, stretch** and express **natural behaviors** over a 24-hour period.
- Animals must have unrestricted **outdoor access** year-round.
- OLPS adds species-specific requirements for **swine**, including requirements for rooting materials and group housing.



OLPS revises production practices and care standards

- OLPS defines and **prohibits** several physical alterations (e.g., teeth clipping, induced molting).
- Other physical alterations may only be performed for **safety** or **identification**.
- Producers must **document** treatment of sick or injured animals.



OLPS sets clearer requirements for transport and slaughter of animals

- Animals being transported must be clearly **identified** and **able to walk**.
- Transport system must be suitable to the **climate** to protect animals from extreme temperatures.
- **FSIS** humane slaughter standards must be followed.



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