



## CATTLE CORNER

### Understanding Ruminant Ration Charts

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One of the core principles of organic ruminant production is meeting the pasture rule. The pasture rule establishes minimum grazing requirements for ruminant groups. A key component of the rule is that groups over the age of 6 months must consume a minimum of 30% dry matter intake from pasture averaged over the entire grazing season. The grazing season is considered to be the period of time when pasture is available for grazing in the geographical region, and it must be at least 120 days.

#### Pasture Rule Verification

Organic inspectors will verify the pasture rule is being met during an organic inspection in several ways. Inspectors will make visual observations of pasture quality and quantity to determine that pasture is managed as a crop and quality is maximized. Inspectors will ask questions such as: "What kinds of grazing methods do you use? Do you reseed pasture? Do you pasture any additional acreage on fields after haying?"

Inspectors will also review written records maintained by the producer including:

- Turn out dates to show the length of the grazing season.
- Ration records indicating the amounts of hay, silage and grain fed to animals during the grazing season and non-grazing season. These can be records per management group or on an individual cow basis.
- Dates that rations are changed.
- Records noting days when animals are confined from pasture and the reason for confinement.

#### Dry Matter Intake Calculations

MOFGA Certification Services (MCS) utilizes the subtraction method for determining dry matter intake from pasture. Producers must document actual feed fed so that inspectors can estimate dry matter intake from pasture based on the following formula:

**Dry matter demand (DMD) - Dry matter fed (DM fed) = Dry matter intake (DMI) from pasture**

**Dry matter demand (DMD)** is an estimate of the need of the individual or group of animals. It is most often based on body weight, stage of growth, and productivity (if lactating). You may use DMD tables or other resources to determine DMD figures for each group of livestock on your operation.

**Dry matter fed (DM fed)** is the grain and forages you provide to organic livestock during the grazing season. It is best if you have dry matter figures/percent moisture from feed tests for your own stored forages, but you can use average book figures. To demonstrate compliance, producers must record the amounts of stored feeds fed out during the grazing season (pounds of silage, hay and grain).

#### Dry matter intake (DMI) from pasture

is estimated on a per-animal or per-group basis. One calculation will be done for each management group that is fed a different ration. Ration changes will result in varying DMI from pasture as the growing season progresses, so we determine compliance based on the weighted average for the entire grazing season.

Ration charts included in a producer's Organic System Plan (OSP) estimate the amount of feed fed during the winter and during the grazing season. Ration charts must be completed by the producer for

each separate management group (dry cows, bred heifers, lactating cows, etc.), even if different groups are fed together. Changes from rations stated in the OSP must be documented in farm records and made available to inspectors during on-site inspections. Producers must review ration charts in their OSP update to determine if any changes are needed.

If you have questions about determining dry matter intake from pasture or livestock ration charts please contact your MCS specialist. Additional information on this subject can be found in the MCS practice manual.

#### NOP citations:

*§ 205.237 Livestock feed. (c) During the grazing season, producers shall:*  
*(1) Provide not more than an average of 70 percent of a ruminant's dry matter demand from dry matter fed (dry matter fed does not include dry matter grazed from residual forage or vegetation rooted in pasture). This shall be calculated as an average over the entire grazing season for each type and class of animal. Ruminant animals must be grazed throughout the entire grazing season for the geographical region, which shall be not less than 120 days per calendar year. Due to weather, season, and/or climate, the grazing season may or may not be continuous.*  
*(2) Provide pasture of a sufficient quality and quantity to graze throughout the grazing season and to provide all ruminants under the organic system plan with an average of not less than 30 percent of their dry matter intake from grazing throughout the grazing season.*

