

LIVESTOCK

MOSES ORGANIC FACT SHEET

Organic Poultry Production: Meat

The market for organic poultry products is vibrant and growing. There are increasing opportunities for small-scale growers to market meat directly to consumers. Growers with larger operations may sell through a diversity of marketing agencies. Before you get very far in your planning, research your markets to ensure your buyers can accommodate additional producers and clarify any special production requirements (large breasted breeds, heirloom breeds, basic or specialty feeds, special husbandry considerations).

Organic poultry may be grown starting from conventional day-old chicks, poults (young turkeys), ducklings etc. The parent stock does not need to be organic, conventional hatcheries may be utilized to purchase your stock.

Birds must be treated organically from the second day of life. This includes following all aspects of the National Organic Standards, including 100% organic feed and using only allowed health treatments.

Organic poultry must have access to the outdoors, as seasonally appropriate. Outdoor areas don't have to be vegetated; however, grass-fed poultry can be an important selling factor in some markets and is claimed by some to produce healthier

birds and better tasting poultry products. Mobile "chicken-tractors" are commonly used to move poultry to fresh pasture on a frequent basis- a technique made popular by Joel Salatin of Polyface Farm. The land used for outdoor access must be certified organic.

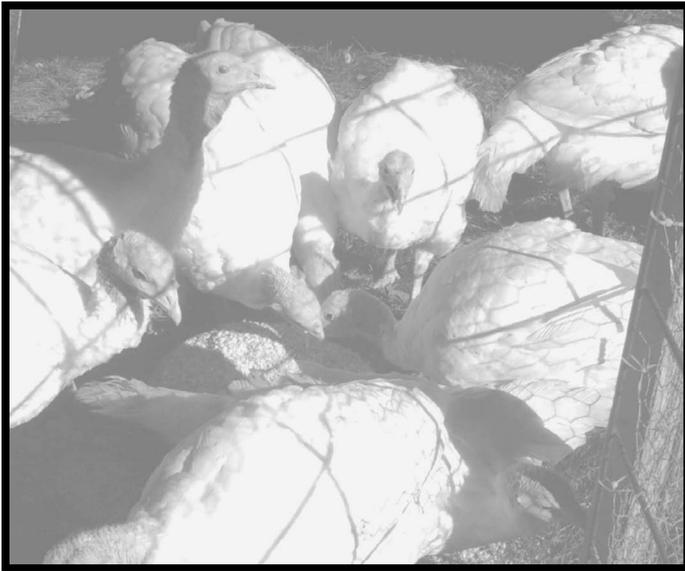
100% certified organic feed is required and must be either purchased or produced on your own certified organic farm. All agricultural feed products and the feed supplements must be organic. This includes secondary ingredients such as soy oil or wheat middlings. Non-agricultural, natural ingredients, such as kelp, grit, calcium, or fishmeal must be approved before use in organic operations. No synthetic preservatives, colors, flowing agents or dust suppressants are allowed. Feed may not include mammalian or poultry slaughter byproducts. Adding organic flax meal to your ration can increase the presence of Omega 3 fatty acids. FDA approved vitamins and trace minerals are allowed as feed additives. DL-Methionine has been approved as a poultry feed additive for use through October of 2012. Methionine is necessary for proper feather and egg production.

Hormones and antibiotics are not allowed in organic meat production. Medicated feed may not be fed. Health issues should be treated through prevention, as most poultry diseases are very difficult to treat. Cleanliness is the best form of defense in disease management. If necessary, only allowed health treatments should be administered. Healthcare alternatives include homeopathy, probiotics, herbs, hydrogen peroxide or vinegar in water, organic raw milk or turmeric added to food for coccidiosis. For more information see ATTRA resources.

Farm biosecurity is very important to prevent transfer of diseases; from farm to farm, from wild birds to domestic, and from one batch of poultry to another. When working with multiple flocks on your farm, move from young to old and not visa-versa. Allow some down-time between flocks so you can clean and sanitize the equipment and facilities.



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Vaccines are allowed, although mostly used in larger operations. Typical vaccines that may be considered include: Newcastle disease, coccidiosis, MG M. gallisepticum and MS M. synoviae. Vaccines may be administered via water, through the air or orally.

Cannibalism may be caused by overcrowding or a ration imbalance. Correct these conditions to reduce the problem. Poultry will peck at bloody spots and will gang up on weak birds. If a bird is injured, it should be isolated from others and allowed to recover.

Predators can be a significant loss factor for small-scale poultry production. Predators can include raccoons, dogs, fox, coyotes, mink, weasels, opossums, rats, and aerial predators including owls and hawks. Poisons are not allowed. Common control methods include live-trapping, tightly constructed facilities to prevent access, electric net fencing, guard animals and flashing lights.

Housing must allow for exercise, freedom of movement and reduction of stress. Cages are not allowed except for short periods of time when an animal is being moved from one location to another. Stationary houses are acceptable, and moveable pens/moveable houses may be used.

Bedding must be certified organic if it is something that the poultry will typically consume (i.e. hay or straw). Typical bedding may be wood shavings (not from treated wood), organic corncobs, organic hay or straw or organic corn fodder.

Processing of meat birds must take place in a certified organic processing facility. Those processing on-farm (allowed in some states in limited numbers- check with your state Department of Agriculture) may butcher and sell organic poultry if

their processing operation is included in their farm plan, inspection and organic certification.

Documentation. Records must be kept on: source of poultry, feed and supplement use and sources, use and source of any health products, vaccinations, mortalities, outside access, house sanitation practices between flocks, and sale of finished product. An audit trail is necessary to show conformation with the National Organic Standards.

Certification. Any operation selling \$5,000 or more in organic product per year must be certified. You must contact an independent third party certification agency, fill out a farm plan, and have an annual inspection. For more information see the MOSES "Guidebook for Organic Certification" or fact sheet series on certification.

Marketing. Those that receive certification from an accredited certifying agency may label their poultry as "certified organic." Labeling and packaging must meet organic and state labeling regulations and list the certifying agency. The USDA organic seal may be used.

More information on small-scale poultry production can be found from ATTRA, www.attra.ncat.org, and from the American Pastured Poultry Producers Association, www.apppa.org

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The Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service (MOSES) provides a variety of resources for farmers interested in organic and sustainable farming. To learn more, please see:

www.mosesorganic.org