



CHAPTER 10

ANIMAL NUTRITION AND VETERINARY CARE

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ANIMAL NUTRITION AND VETERINARY CARE



Livestock farmers are also crop farmers by virtue of their grazing management practices as well as any fodder crops which they may produce. Therefore all of the crop production principles and standards apply to a livestock farm too.

This section deals with the organic requirements of the feed from the animals' perspective rather than the production of the feed as such.

Furthermore, preventative husbandry practices form the basis of sound animal health. Many health disorders may be corrected through good quality balanced nutrition which in turn is derived from healthy plants grown on organically well managed healthy living soils. However, the well-being of animals is of paramount importance and sick animals have to receive immediate veterinary treatment, irrespective of the consequence to their certification status. Veterinary care is therefore also discussed.

10.1. Feed materials, additives and processing aids – NOA Organic Standard Section 6.2. (NOA S6.2) g and Annexure V

The NOA standards have a detailed list of the fodder and feed which organic animals are allowed to eat:

10.1.1. Plant based feed – NOA Annexure V

This is a full range of plants and their products derived from processing. There are some restrictions with regards to the processing methods that are allowed, such as for seaweed which may only be washed, dried and crushed, or their use, such as plant protein extracts which

may only be fed to young animals. The processing section of the NOA Standards further describes the extraction processes which are allowed.

10.1.2. Feed materials of animal origin – NOA Organic Standard Section 6.2. j.v and vi and Annexure V

Perhaps one of the most contentious aspects of the livestock standards is that animal derived feeds are strictly controlled. The principle here is that animals should not be fed products that they would naturally not eat, unless of course if they find these in their natural grazing and choose to eat them. An example is that although cattle may lick bird droppings in the veld, they may not be fed poultry manure as a managerial practice.

Herbivores may not be fed animal by-products such as meat and bone meal believed to be the root cause of “Mad Cow Disease” (Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, BSE) which peaked in the 1990’s. However they may be fed fish and other marine animals, their products and by-products, which have been produced by prescribed methods.

10.1.3. Minerals used as feed – NOA Organic Standard Section 6.2. j.vii and Annexure V

The standards list minerals from natural sources which may be fed to livestock thereby excluding the use of manufactured nitrogen sources such as urea. Some may be processed, such as de-fluorinated rock phosphate. However, they may not have undergone chemical treatment to make them more soluble.

10.1.4. Additives used in the production of feed – NOA Organic Standard Section 6.2. i.i and ii and Annexure V

The feed additives which may be used are listed – these may be seen as trace nutrients that may be deficient in natural plant materials. They include minerals, vitamins, enzymes, microorganisms, preservatives, binders, anti-caking agents, coagulants and antioxidants. These must be from natural origin except for nature identical synthetic vitamins A, D and E.

10.1.5. Processing aids used in feed manufacture – NOA Annexure V

Natural sources of processing aids used for making silage are listed.

[Click here for the list](#)

10.1.6. Other products used as feed – NOA Annexure V

Brewer’s yeast may also be used for feeding livestock.

10.2. Certification status of feed – NOA S6.2. h and j

The principle is that livestock should be fed 100% organic feed. However, the reality is that this is not always possible, so the NOA standards set limits on the amount of non-organic feed that may be fed:

- For herbivores 50% of feed must come from the farm on which they are being produced, or from another certified farm. (There are instances where crop and livestock farmers have arrangements for the exchange of feed and manure between the two farms, seen as a method of nutrient cycling, which is at the heart of organic farming). Note that all feed calculations are on a dry matter (DM) basis
- On average up to 60% of the feed may be in-conversion feed if the feed comes from the same farm upon which the livestock is being raised
- Herbivores may receive a maximum of 5% DM of non-organic origin in areas where
 - organic agriculture is in the early days of the development,
 - the available organic feed is of inadequate quantity and quality because of extreme natural circumstances or an accident which has contaminated the available feed
- Roughage, fresh or dried fodder or silage must make up at least 60% of the daily herbivore ration

Veterinary products such as antibiotics, coccidiostats, growth regulators and heat synchronisation hormones may not be given to animals through their feed.

Feeds may not contain any GMOs or their derivatives.

10.3. Feeding of young animals – NOA S6.2. l and m

Young herbivores must be raised on maternal or organic milk from their

own species. Non-organic milk and milk replacements may be used in emergencies.

Cattle may not be weaned before the age of three months and sheep and goats before 45 days.

10.4. Veterinary Care

A golden rule is that the immediate treatment of sick and injured animals is of primary importance, irrespective of the consequences to certification status of the animal. Animals must be treated with care and when sick given every opportunity to regain their balance and health while the farmer also takes measures to remove the cause and to prevent further occurrences.

10.5. Appropriate action

A farmer must take immediate and appropriate action when livestock are sick or injured.

The following three steps are vital:

10.5.1. Take care of the affected animal

Immediate and appropriate care, “first aid”, must be given to the affected animal. The organic livestock farmer’s informed decisions are further guided by the “Preferential sequencing of veterinary treatment” discussion below (see 10.6).

Appropriate care continues after appropriate veterinary action. This includes ensuring that

the animal's immediate surroundings are safe and secure by providing additional shelter and bedding, regular cleaning and dressing of wounds, bandaging and herbal or electrolytic water to drink as appropriate. This may be difficult under extensive conditions, so the animal needs to be moved closer to the farmer's home to facilitate regular care if necessary.

10.5.2. Remove all obstacles to cure

While administering the first aid, all obstacles to cure must be removed. This is a homoeopathic principle of acknowledging the "life energy" which exists in all organisms, helping them to maintain balance and "ease".

"Dis-ease" (disease) occurs when the life energy is thrown out of balance through illness or injury. Therefore cleaning, washing and sanitation remove harmful pathogenic organisms while applying wound dressing creates a healing environment around the wound, both actions resulting in the removal of obstacles to and thus promoting cure. These actions, together with the veterinary treatment, including the use of antibiotics where necessary, create the opportunity for the animal to restore the balance of its life energy.

10.5.3. Ensure the well-being of all other animals

After the sick animal has been treated and the obstacles to cure have been removed, the farmer's attention can turn to the other animals in the herd or flock to secure their continued well-being. Very often the steps taken in NOA S6.1.2 will suffice, especially if an animal suffering

from a contagious disease has been isolated from the others, or the same measures need to be taken at a herd or flock level.

For the organic farmer ensuring the well-being of the other animals does not include the administering of preventative veterinary treatment based on synthetic medicines. So while the sick animal may be given antibiotics, the rest of the herd may be given some herbal remedies or probiotic cultures to reinforce their immune systems, preventing them from becoming sick. The same curative herbal or probiotic treatment given to a sick animal may also be given to the others as preventative measures.

10.6. Preferential sequencing of veterinary treatment – NOA S6.2. pi and ii

The standards specify the sequence in which different types of medication must be used. Phytotherapeutic and homeopathic medicines, trace elements and mineral supplements must be used in preference to chemically synthesised medicines or antibiotics.

The latter may only be used under the responsibility of a veterinarian.

10.7. Preventative treatment and hormones are not allowed

– NOA S6.2. p.iii and iv

Regular administration of synthetic substances as preventative or prophylactic treatment, or to control or promote growth and reproduction cycles, is prohibited.

These substances may only be used on individual animals to correct disorders diagnosed by a veterinarian.

10.8. Allowed preventative treatment

– NOA S6.2. p.vii

The use of legally required vaccines and those for the prevention or treatment of recognised endemic diseases, treatment for external and internal parasites, and legally required treatments to buildings, equipment and facilities are allowed.

With the exception of vaccines, this is the only instance in certified organic agriculture when GMOs and their derivatives may be used.

However animals may be given various supplements, such as herbs in their fodder, if these herbs promote their general well-being through supporting their immune systems.

10.9. Withdrawal periods

– NOA S6.2. p. viii

When allopathic veterinary products have been used the withdrawal period is double that which is required, or in cases where there is none, then 48 hours are required.

10.10. Emergencies

– NOA S6.2.

Despite the best managerial practices and care, predator attack, mishaps and illness do occur. Animals may receive two courses of chemically synthesised treatments, including antibiotics a year and still maintain their organic status. This excludes the treatments *described in S6.3 above*.

Should they receive a third or more courses and the farmer wishes to return them to the organic herd, they must then undergo the described conversion periods. However, they or their products may not be sold as organic.