

USDA's Proposed Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards Would Deliver First Federal Legal Standards for Farm Animals

Final Rule Should Be Implemented With One-Year Phase In; Option for a 15-Year Phase-In for Laying Hen Welfare Is Absurd and Unacceptable

WASHINGTON, D.C., UNITED STATES , August 8, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Center for a Humane Economy, Animal Wellness Action, and the Animal Wellness Foundation welcomed the U.S. Department of Agriculture's release last week of the [proposed Organic Livestock and Poultry Standards rule](#), which calls for elevated animal welfare standards in organic animal agriculture. The rule appears

similar in content to the January 2017 proposed rule from President Obama's outgoing leaders at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). That rule, however, was [nixed some months later by President Trump's USDA](#), and that adverse action was just the latest in decades of delay and disruption after the adoption of the Organic Foods Production Act authorizing a National Organic Program (NOP) to be administered by USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS). The 1990 federal law was championed by Senator Patrick Leahy, former chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee.



Pasture Raised Chickens that would be allowed to have outdoor access under new proposed rule

"If this rule is put into practice in a timely way, this new standard will finally deliver meaningful humane treatment standards for animals raised under the 'organic' label and it will give consumers more confidence and peace of mind that the label is not a hollow promise or a marketing gimmick," said [Wayne Pacelle](#), president of the Center for a Humane Economy. "This rule will also be a boon to farmers, giving them an opportunity to produce a value-added product for consumers and to earn a livelihood for responsible animal care and husbandry on the land."

The new rule covers a whole array of housing, husbandry, and management topics, including the prohibition of certain painful practices, like tail docking of pigs and cattle and debeaking of birds. Importantly, the rule sets minimum indoor and outdoor space requirements for egg-laying



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*Wayne Pacelle, president at
the Center for a Humane
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chickens and requires that producers provide a sufficient number of exits and outdoor enrichment to entice birds to go outside on a daily basis. It also specifies that covered porches and similar structures do not qualify as outdoor space.

Robust and meaningful organic animal agriculture standards, in the works for decades and the product of input from organic farmers all around the nation, demonstrate the changing social consensus on animals among consumers increasingly concerned about farm animal welfare. A 2015 Consumer Reports survey found that more than 70 percent of Americans believe there should be meaningful minimum-size living space

requirements for farm animals raised under the organic label, and that the animals should have access to the outdoors, yet the current regulations do not guarantee these basic protections for organically raised animals. Another Consumer Reports survey showed that more than 80 percent of Americans support the standards enshrined in the new rule.

"These standards need to be put in place a year from adoption for all species types," added Mr. Pacelle, who has been working on this issue for a quarter century. "It is absurd that there is an option in the proposal to delay implementation of some of the laying hen standards for 15 years. Egg farmers have known this was coming for two decades, and many of them have rightly realigned production to account for these impending changes."

"This is a pro-farmer rule if there ever was one," added Marty Irby, executive director of Animal Wellness Action and a member of the board of directors at the Organization for Competitive Market, a national organization composed of working farmers. "Farmers will be rewarded in the marketplace when consumers understand that 'organic standards' mean that animals have outdoor access and are treatment humanely from the beginning of their lives until the end. Honest-minded organic farmers have wanted this rule for three decades and implementation cannot come soon enough for them and for consumers."

Animal Wellness Action is a Washington, D.C.-based 501(c)(4) organization with a mission of helping animals by promoting legal standards forbidding cruelty. We champion causes that alleviate the suffering of companion animals, farm animals, and wildlife. We advocate for policies to stop dogfighting and cockfighting and other forms of malicious cruelty and to confront factory farming and other systemic forms of animal exploitation. To prevent cruelty, we promote enacting good public policies, and we work to enforce those policies. To enact good laws, we must elect good lawmakers, and that's why we remind voters which candidates care about our issues and which ones don't. We believe helping animals helps us all.

The Animal Wellness Foundation (Foundation) is a Los Angeles-based private charitable organization with a mission of helping animals by making veterinary care available to everyone with a pet, regardless of economic ability. We organize rescue efforts and medical services for dogs and cats in need and help homeless pets find a loving caregiver. We are advocates for getting veterinarians to the front lines of the animal welfare movement; promoting responsible pet ownership; and vaccinating animals against infectious diseases such as distemper. We also support policies that prevent animal cruelty and that alleviate suffering. We believe helping animals helps us all.

The Center for a Humane Economy is a non-profit organization that focuses on influencing the conduct of corporations to forge a humane economic order. The first organization of its kind in the animal protection movement, the Center encourages businesses to honor their social responsibilities in a culture where consumers, investors, and other key stakeholders abhor cruelty and the degradation of the environment and embrace innovation as a means of eliminating both.

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