Raising sheep and goats

ORGANICALLY

There is a growing demand for organically raised and processed meat, milk, and fiber. Perceptions of organic and its impact on health, the environment and animal welfare vary. Regardless, there is a growing number of consumers interested in paying more money for products produced in accordance with their beliefs. The sheep and goat industry would be foolish not to recognize this growing market.

Requirements for USDA Certified Organic

- Record keeping and annual inspections
- Individual animal identification
- Preventative health care and management
- Justification for docking, castrating, and disbudding
- 100% certified organic feed (except for trace minerals and vitamins)
- 100% certified organic milk replacer
- 100% certified organic pasture
- 100% certified organic bedding
- Pasture mandate: at least 120 days per year and at least 30% of DMI from pasture
- Year-round access to outdoors
- Meat processed in a certified organic facility
- Wool processing addressed by GOTS (global-standard.org)

Certification fees vary and can be costly.

Treatment cannot be withheld to maintain organic status.

What is prohibited

- No antibiotics ever, not even to treat sick animals.
- Ionophores to prevent coccidiosis
- Dewormers to treat parasitized animals (emergency treatment of breeders allowed)
- Complete confinement (temporary allowed)
- Synthetic pesticides and fertilizers

What is allowed

- Some synthetic substances for treatment (§ 205.603), e.g., propylene glycol, calcium borogluconate, Kaolin pectin, aspirin
- Biologics (vaccines) to help prevent disease
- Manure for fertilizer

Not sure

- Copper oxide wire particles (COWP) for worm control
- BioWorma® or Livamol® with BioWorma® to reduce contamination of pastures with infective worm larvae

By Susan Schoenian, Sheep & Goat Specialist Emeritus, University of Maryland Extension. For more information, go to https://www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/Organic%20Livestock%20Requirements.pdf