

## FEEDING ORGANIC POULTRY

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Organic foods are becoming more popular with consumers, including organic poultry. The USDA's National Organic Program (NOP) has outlined the requirements that must be met for poultry to be certified organic. Several of these requirements have implications for the feeding of organic poultry. 1. Organic poultry must have access to the outdoors, 'with encouragement to use it.' It is recommended that the 'encouragement' be in the form of pasture, but there is limited research on how pasture affects the nutrition of poultry. The results of a behavioral study are currently be evaluated to determine which pasture crops (legumes and grasses) laying hens prefer. In addition, samples of the same crops were harvested at different stages to evaluate their nutrient content to develop a pasture management program for organic poultry production which can complement the feeding program. 2. Synthetic methionine is routinely added to conventional poultry diets, but starting October 2008 it will be banned from organic poultry diets. Research is underway to find alternatives to synthetic methionine. 3. As a by-product of the push for ethanol in gasoline the price of corn, both conventionally and organically produced, has risen considerably. The price of both organic corn and soybean meal is expected to remain high. Research is underway to evaluate alternative feed ingredients that can be incorporated into organic poultry diets.