

Disease prevention and veterinary treatment in Organic Farming

The EU and DEFRA organic standard splits animal health and welfare into two elements, the prevention of disease and the treatment of disease.

1. Prevention

The principles set out below should limit animal-health problems so that disease can be controlled mainly by prevention.

- i) Choosing a breed that will work within your system. Breeds that may require high inputs may not be appropriate.
- ii) Managing animals so that they can demonstrate natural behaviour will encourage strong resistance to disease and the prevention of infections;
- iii) Using high quality feed, together with regular exercise and access to pasturage, this will increase the natural defence of the animal.
- iv) Check stocking levels in housing and when out grazing. Overstocking can increase disease spread.
- v) Bio security and quarantine measures will minimise the risk of introducing disease onto the farm.

2. Treatment

If, despite all of the above preventive measures, an animal becomes sick or injured, it must be treated immediately, if necessary in isolation, and in suitable housing.

Veterinary medicinal products must be authorised in accordance with current European and UK legislation and should only be used as permitted under such legislation.

There are many **herbal, homeopathic and trace element** products that can treat ailments and should be considered as the first route of treatment if applicable. If these products are not appropriate, chemically-synthesised allopathic veterinary medicinal products or antibiotics should be used as treatment to avoid suffering or distress to the animal. All veterinary treatments, including herbal ones are required to be registered by the Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD).

Veterinary medicines or antibiotics should not be used for **routine disease prevention**. Only where preventative husbandry measures have failed can this be justified and then only if part of an approved health plan.

Vaccines can be used when a disease risk has been identified. The vaccine that you use should be specific to the disease. e.g. don't use a 7 in 1 vaccine when a 4 in 1 vaccine is adequate. Choice of vaccine should be discussed with your vet.

A **withdrawal period** of at least twice the statutory period before slaughter or milk sale must be observed. Where no withdrawal period is stated or where the stated period is zero days a minimum of 48 hours is required. Please clarify with your control body. Antibiotic milk should not be fed to calves.



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Three strikes and you are out; With the exception of vaccinations, treatments for parasites and compulsory eradication schemes if an animal or group of animals receive more than three courses of treatments with a chemically-synthesised allopathic veterinary medicinal products or antibiotics within 12 months, or more than one course of treatment if their productive lifecycle is less than one year, the livestock concerned, or produce derived from them, may not be sold as organic products. Breeding animals can be reconverted.

Health Plan

A health plan must be developed for your livestock enterprise, preferably with the assistance of a vet, and reviewed at least annually. The plan must ensure the development of a pattern of health building and disease control measures appropriate to the particular circumstances of the individual farm and allow for the evolution of a farming system becoming progressively less dependent on allopathic veterinary medicinal products. Please see other fact sheets for more information on developing your health plan.

This fact sheet has been written using DEFRA Regulations, QWFC, OF&G and SA Standards. The fact sheet should only be used as a guide, and full standards are available from your control body.