

## UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2005

**RESOLUTION:** 46 APPROVED AS AMENDED

**SOURCE:** COMMITTEE ON TRANSMISSIBLE DISEASES OF  
POULTRY AND OTHER AVIAN SPECIES

**SUBJECT MATTER:** AMENDMENT OF THE NATIONAL ORGANIC PROGRAM  
SECTION 205.239, REQUIRING ACCESS TO THE  
OUTDOORS, TO MAKE ACCESS OPTIONAL AND TO  
PROVIDE FOR CONFINEMENT DURING OUTBREAKS OF  
HIGHLY PATHOGENIC AVIAN INFLUENZA

**DATES:** Hershey, Pennsylvania – November 3-9, 2005

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

The American public expressed a desire for organic foods and a formal certification program for such foods. The National Organic Program (NOP) was formed to meet this need and became regulation in October 2001. There are many distinctive and unique requirements for the production and processing of organic foods including poultry. Section 205.239, a, 1 of the NOP requires that the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) certified organic poultry have “access to the outdoors” during their production life. This outdoor access enhances the likelihood that such poultry will have direct contact with migratory and wild birds as well as other animals. This requirement for outdoor access by a department of the official agricultural agency of this country, USDA, seems incongruous at best. Disease control is a priority for certified organic poultry as well as conventionally reared poultry. In over 50 years of progress, the poultry industries of this country have moved their flocks inside and this action has contributed significantly to the improvement in health of the nation’s chicken and turkey flocks. Avian influenza (AI) has been a long-standing threat to the health of our poultry and now takes on new potential public health and media perception identities. Migratory and wild birds are known carriers of AI virus and as such contact between them and domestic poultry must be prevented.

### **RESOLUTION:**

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) work with the National Organic Program (NOP) to change to section 205.239, a, 1 of the NOP regulations by eliminating the words “Access to the outdoors” as a requirement for production of USDA certified organic poultry. As amended, Section 205.239 reads: “(a) The producer must establish and maintain livestock living conditions, which accommodate the health and natural behavior of animals including:

1. ~~Access to the outdoors~~ shade, shelter, exercise areas, fresh air and direct sunlight suitable to the species, its stage of production, the climate and the environment.”

USAHA further recommend adding the following qualifying statement: “Direct access of poultry to the outdoors is not required, as this practice is a deterrent to the prevention of exposure to avian influenza (AI) and other diseases of poultry. In the event of the detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza in birds in the United States, then direct access of poultry in the NOP to the outdoors should be prohibited.

### **RESPONSE:**

**ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE, VETERINARY SERVICES (APHIS-VS)**

The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) will need to consider the regulatory changes proposed in this resolution. Veterinary Services has forwarded this resolution to them. Also, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has discussed with AMS our concerns for avian health, disease transmission, disease prevention and control regarding the National Organic Program husbandry standards for organic poultry production and for the potential contact with wild birds for organic poultry given access to the outdoors. AMS requested that APHIS provide them with recommendations and guidance on biosecurity and avian disease prevention and control practices for organic poultry operations. APHIS and AMS agreed to work together to develop joint guidance on organic poultry health and disease prevention that AMS could apply when interpreting their general “access to the outdoors” and “temporary confinement rules”. APHIS is preparing a draft guidance document that will be forwarded to AMS for their review.