



ORGANIC TRUST CLG

Organic Weanling, Beef & Lamb Production – what you need to consider prior to entering organics?

Breed Selection – Weanling Producers: There is a market for both traditional and continental animals and most breeds are suitable for organic farming. Soil type and location will affect your choice of breed. It is suggested that you carry out some research with the meat processors such as Good Herdsmen Ltd to establish the breeds most successful from the point of view of the end carcass.

non-organic straw or untreated shavings) but 50% of the area could be slatted. Cubicles must be 3m² for each 500 kg animal – less (pro rata) for smaller animals.

The above are examples only; therefore, we suggest that you study Section 4.06 of the standards manual for the detailed size requirements as regards animal housing.

Feed: As 100% of the feed must be **organic** you need (ideally) to be able to produce your entire forage requirement on your farm. Supplementary feeding should not be excessive if you are producing weanlings. However, if you are in the Suckler Welfare Scheme you are required to provide supplementary feed during the weaning period. Organic grain and organic compounded feed is now available in most local farm co-ops but is expensive and may need to be ordered in advance.

Veterinary Treatments: Protecting animal health is the most important objective of the organic livestock farmer and the Vet is an important advisor on your farm. He can provide you with valuable advice on how to reduce dependence on veterinary inputs by maintaining the herd in the optimum condition e.g. fencing wet areas, reducing parasite burdens and so forth. If, however, there is a breakdown in the system, you treat the animal as you would have done as a conventional farmer and record the event, including doubling or tripling the statutory withdrawal period of the product (no organophosphate-based compounds can be used). A breeding animal is allowed two full courses of antibiotics in a 12 month period but an animal intended for the meat market is allowed one. See Section 4.10 of the standards manual for the detailed requirements.

At the application stage, an **Animal Health Plan** must be drawn up in conjunction with your veterinary surgeon. This should state the issues endemic on your farm (e.g. Blackleg) and also other issues which can arise for which veterinary inputs may be required. All veterinary inputs can only be used in consultation with the prescribing veterinary surgeon. The Animal Health Plan must be signed by the veterinary surgeon and submitted with your application documentation. The Organic Trust provide a template for the Animal Health Plan for ease of use – please apply to the office for this template. The Animal Health Plan must then be updated annually via the annual renewal form provided to each Organic Trust Member at renewal date.

Market: There are a number of dedicated organic marts being held nationwide throughout the year – these are ideal venues in which to source and sell organic livestock – the dates and venues of these marts are published on the Organic Trust website and are also notified to all Organic Trust licensees by text message. Some farmers prefer private sales and a free add can be placed by Organic Trust members on the Organic Trust



Most farmers will convert their current stock, whose progeny (subject to certain conditions) will be organic when the land is awarded organic status, 2 years after entering organics (i.e. calves born 3 months after the registered commencement date of conversion will be awarded organic status simultaneously with the land). If, however, your current stock is not suitable or is not up to the spec you require, it is a good idea to build up a quality herd **prior to entering** organics. Once in the system you are generally only allowed to buy in 10% of your adult herd numbers each year as non-organic (must breed for the first time on your holding) and only if you can't source them organically – you will be required to provide proof that efforts were made to source organically certified stock. Artificial insemination is permitted. The key to success in this area is forward planning – breed your own replacements as far as possible.

Animal performance should be as good on a well run organic farm as on a conventional one. Output per hectare may be reduced due to lower stocking rates unless adequate attention is paid to clover/ grass swards.

Housing: Some buyers require animals prior to the animals first winter while others require stronger animals which will be outwintered. You will generally require 1m² of housing per 100kg of animal (example based on the requirement for an average suckler cow which amounts to 5m² per cow). Half the area must be of solid floor construction and requires bedding (generally



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Vernon House, 2 Vernon Avenue, Clontarf, Dublin 3, Ireland. + 353 1 8530271 info@organictrust.ie www.organictrust.ie



website – www.organictrust.ie - under the Classifieds Section. This provides Organic Trust members with a real-time marketing facility to market their products, produce and services. All Organic Trust members are also allocated a free page on the website after organic status has been awarded to the farm.

Organic Beef Production

Buying stock – Beef producers: Weanlings can be bought through a number of dedicated organic marts which are held nationwide throughout the year – refer to earlier 'Market' section for full details. However, private farm-to-farm purchases allows the buyer to build up dialogue with the producer and better quality animals tend to be bought which are weaned, castrated and disbudded to the buyers preference.

Depending on breed these cattle may be finished from 20 to 30 months of age, but markets do become available for over 30 month beef from time to time. If you plan on buying in stores for finishing over the summer grazing period you will require good linkages and advanced planning with store producers to ensure a supply of organic animals when buying-in.

Housing, Feed & Veterinary Inputs: As indicated earlier.

Market: There are a number of abattoirs/meat processors now killing organic livestock and the demand has been strong for the last few years – see the Organic Trust membership listing for details. They require continuity of supply and up to date information regarding prices can be sought directly from the certified organic meat processors.

Organic Sheep production – what you need to consider prior to entering organics?



Sheep can be invaluable on a mixed organic farm by improving sward quality by eating grass which cattle leave behind around dung pats. They also graze clover pastures tight over winter allowing light into the sward in spring and help to control weeds. They can increase LU/ha easily if run as a minority enterprise on the farm.

Breed Selection: Organic farmers tend to move away from Suffolk ewes (unless early lambing is required) due to their lack of tolerance to worms. Texel ewes have substantially better resistance to parasites and if aiming for a high lambing percentage these can be crossed with Belclare. A crossbreed ewe can be crossed with either Texel, Suffolk or



Charollais rams to increase growth rate. Again, it is suggested that you establish your breeding flock prior to entry to

Housing: Stock can be outwintered but if housing you will be required to have 1.5 m² / ewe with an additional 0.35 m² /

lamb. Half the area must be bedded (straw or untreated shavings). Straw for bedding can be non-organic. The above are examples only, therefore, we suggest that you study Section 4.06 of the standards manual for the detailed size requirements as regards animal housing.

Veterinary Treatments: As stated earlier, an Animal Health Plan drawn up in consultation with your veterinary surgeon is a compulsory requirement. See weanling/beef section for full requirements. Again it is emphasised that disease prevention should be practiced where possible. This means that sheep-only farms are a challenge due to parasite build-up especially stomach worms – see separate hand out on clean grazing plans.

Instances of fluke can be reduced by fencing off wet areas (and using them as habitat areas or forestry). Lameness can be treated by copper foot baths or neat copper and moving the stock onto land where sheep have not been for the previous 14 days.

Double fencing and breeding own replacements reduce the chances of introducing disease into the flock and helps build up resistance to pathogens on the farm.

Regular dagging to reduce the risk of flystrike is recommended.

Cyromazine is permitted for prevention, and deltamethrin as well as shearing affected areas and removing maggots if treatment is required.

Feed: As stated in weanling/beef section.

Further information available from Organic Trust office.



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