

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS – ANIMAL HEALTH

What is an Animal Health Plan?

The Animal Health Plan is submitted as part of the application process and must be updated annually. The plan should identify all significant livestock pest and disease problems that you may face and outline how you intend to prevent their occurrence. The plan also needs to identify the treatments that will be used if problems occur, and your procedures to improve overall herd health and reduce reliance on veterinary treatments. The plan must be signed off by your vet and be available at your organic inspection.

An Animal Health Plan template is available on our website for guidance.

How do you maintain good livestock health?

Disease prevention is key to good livestock health and it is recommended to plan ahead using your animal health plan to mitigate potential disease burdens. Many organic farmers operate a closed system. For cattle and sheep grazing new pastures each year allows for better control of stomach worm infestations. Fluke should be controlled by grazing and fencing off wet areas. Dosing for worms and fluke is permitted based on evidence that it is required e.g., faecal sampling or liver analysis.

For sheep in particular, regular foot trimming and zinc sulphate foot baths are recommended to control lameness. Copper sulphate is also permitted but formaldehyde is not.

Note that the withdrawal period for synthetic medicines used is doubled when farming organically. It is always advisable to check with the Irish Organic Association for products that are permitted for use.

What veterinary treatments can I use?

Routine dosing is not permitted, preventative husbandry and management practices are encouraged. The Organic Standards recommend the use of homeopathic and herbal preparations in preference to synthetic chemical medicines. However, in order to minimise suffering and distress synthetic chemical medicines are permitted under veterinary supervision. An extended withdrawal period on any products used is required for meat and milk products. Full records of all treatments must be kept for your organic inspection.

Are minerals permitted?

Minerals buckets, licks and boluses are allowed and if they are used you should indicate that in your Animal Health Plan.

Is artificial insemination allowed?

Yes, AI is permitted as is sexed semen. No synchronization or animal hormones are allowed.

How are worms controlled without the use of routine worming?

Good livestock management including grazing management and pasture rotation is recommended. Grazing priority should be given to young stock. It is also good practice to rotate cattle with other livestock and forage areas. Allowing calves to develop immunity and build up resistance is encouraged in organic farming. Mixed grazing of cattle and sheep is another approach to consider to help dilute worm burdens.

Are antibiotics allowed for use in organic farming?

In order to limit animal distress and illness, animals for meat production can receive 1 course of treatment in a 12-month period. Animals for breeding can receive 2 courses of treatment in a 12-month period. Animals for milk production can receive 2 courses of treatment for mastitis within a 12-month period. In all cases where the above is exceeded the animal must either be sold as non-organic or undergo a further 15-month conversion period.

Are dips allowed?

Dips and spot on are allowed, however any products containing organophosphates are strictly prohibited. Contact the Irish Organic Association for more information on products that you wish to use.