



THE ORGANIC FEDERATION OF CANADA NEWSLETTER

August 13, 2020

Countdown to the publication of the 2020 Canadian Organic Standards A weekly teaser explaining revised text

The revision of the Canadian Organic Standard (COS), which began in September 2018, will soon be complete. The Canadian General Standards Board (CGSB) plans to publish the 2020 version of the COS in the fall (as the current COS was published in November 2015 and all Canadian National Standards must be revised every five years).

The revisions to the standard have been the subject of much debate.

Practices related to animal welfare, promotion of biodiversity, greenhouse production and other types of production have been assessed and compared to the organic standards of our trading partners.

Consensus was sometimes difficult to reach, but, in the end, the COS 2020 includes improved practices and is intended to meet consumer expectations of COS-certified organic products.

These news items will inform operators and stakeholders of the updated practices of Canadian organic production. In the fall of 2020, the OFC will present a webinar describing in detail the adopted revisions to the organic standard. Please note that operators will have a full year to comply with the revised practices of the OBC 2020 from the date of its publication by the CGSB.

The following text is based on the *Guide to the Canadian Organic Standards 2020*, which will be published by Canadian Organic Growers Inc. in November 2020. The online guide will be available free of charge at cog.ca.

Poultry welfare

Overhead cover for shade and protection

Leaving the barn to go out into a wide-open space can be intimidating for a chicken. Avian predators, such as hawks, can be a threat. Poultry are less likely to venture outside or to use all the range provided unless there is some cover in the form of trees, shrubs or constructed shade.

Also, birds like a shady spot to escape the sun.



The trees planted at Ferme St-Ours will soon provide shade for the farm's layers.
Photo: Serge Lefebvre

The ultimate goal is to have more birds spend more time outside on the range. In clause 6.13.1.b 3), overhead cover on the range is required for both layers and meat birds to help meet this goal.

A number of options are available: a farmer can plant trees in the range but until these are large enough to provide cover, artificial covers can be used.

To avoid excessive pressure on the pasture in shaded areas, farmers can use portable structures or materials, such as netting, tent-like structures or shelters that can be moved by tractors.

A large roof overhang, like a verandah, can help chickens feel more secure going out the popholes. This is not sufficient, however, to encourage the birds to explore more of the range. This is why the overhang

- (i) can account for only up to half of the required cover,
- (ii) must cover pasture, not just the gravel around a barn, and
- (iii) must be effective.

For example, a small overhang (18-24 inches) that doesn't provide much cover might not be considered "effective."

❧ The revised clause ❧

6.13.1 The operator shall establish and maintain poultry living conditions that accommodate the health and natural behaviour of poultry as follows:

b) Poultry shall be reared in open-range conditions and have free access to pasture, open-air runs, and other exercise areas, subject to weather and ground conditions. Outdoor areas shall:...

3) have effective overhead cover (for shade and protection from avian predators) distributed throughout the range area of barn-raised birds to encourage continual use by the birds. The cover may be natural (such as trees, shrubs and crops) or artificial (such as shade cloth, camouflage netting, screens or trailers). Roof overhangs over pasture may account for up to 50% of the required overhead cover if they are functional (i.e., they provide shade and protection from avian predators). By November 2023, operators shall submit a plan to ensure that this overhead cover shall represent at least 10% of the minimum required range area (as outlined in Table 5 of 6.13.13) by November 2025; ...

Organic production systems: general principles and management standards, CAN/CGSB-32.310.
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Enriched verandahs: a playground for laying hens

Barn-raised laying hens will have access to an enriched verandah to get fresh air, a bit of exercise and a chance to play at certain times whenever they can't go outside due to bad weather or risk of exposure to disease.

“Enriched verandahs” are sometimes called “winter gardens” but the space is not just used in the winter. In the summer, the birds may need access to the enriched verandah on rainy days or when Avian Influenza is a threat (e.g., a flock of wild geese are grazing in the run). In parts of Canada, it might be used mostly from early spring to late fall because it may be too cold to use during the mid-winter. The enriched verandah serves many purposes. Because it has natural lighting and a temperature similar to the outdoor temperature, the verandah is a transitional zone between the barn and the outdoors; this may help birds feel more comfortable going outside and using the range.



The enriched verandah contains environmental enrichments such as microgreens or hay to allow more natural foraging behaviour, and/or hanging objects (strings, corn cobs, balls) that the birds can reach up and peck. To stimulate jumping, perching and playing, farmers can provide perches, straw bales, step stools which birds can perch on or hide under, and/or pails with holes in the bottoms which are laid on their sides. These enrichments provide opportunities for the poultry to express their natural behaviour more fully and reduce anti-social activities (such as feather pecking).

Enriched verandahs are not required either for pullets or broilers. Also, they are not needed for layers that go outside in chicken tractors or portable shelters during the summer, however all these birds would also benefit from having access to such facilities.

❧The revised clause ❧

6.13.3 Enriched verandahs for barn-raised layers

- a) Enriched verandahs shall be used when barn-raised layers do not have access to outdoor runs because of weather or disease constraints.
- b) An enriched verandah is a covered, uninsulated, unheated extension to a poultry barn. Birds shall have access to the enriched verandah year-round during daylight hours, at least from spring through fall. The enriched verandah shall:
 - 1) have an outdoor climate but offer protection from inclement weather (e.g., wind, rain), rodents, predators and disease threats;
 - 2) represent at least 1/3 of the footprint of the indoor barn area;
 - 3) have natural lighting which may be supplemented with artificial lighting;

- 4) have a sand floor, a dirt floor or a solid floor covered with bedding, such as straw or wood shavings, for comfort and warmth and to encourage foraging, scratching and dust-bathing behaviours;
 - 5) offer enrichments (examples include perches, trays of greens, hay bales, pecking objects) to encourage natural behaviours; and
 - 6) not count towards indoor or outdoor space allowance.
- c) Enriched verandahs shall be provided in new construction for barn-raised layers. They shall be added to existing infrastructure when the operator cannot demonstrate that at least 25% of layers utilize the outdoor range when there are no weather or disease constraints.
- d) All existing enriched verandahs shall be accepted as they are as of November 2020; they are exempt from 6.13.3.b.2 and 6.13.3.b.6.
- e) If the operator can demonstrate that the addition of an enriched verandah of the size specified in 6.13.3b is not possible for an existing barn due to lack of space or because of design limitations of the existing barn:
- 1) a smaller enriched verandah shall be allowed provided it is as close in size as possible to the requirement of $\frac{1}{3}$ of the footprint of the indoor barn area; or
 - 2) the enriched verandah shall be constructed in the uncovered outdoor area and, as an exception, may count as part of the outdoor space allowance; or
 - 3) operators are granted an exemption that permits the use of existing infrastructure until November 2030, provided that a plan for the new construction or renovation is in place by November 2025.

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SCIENCE CLUSTER 3

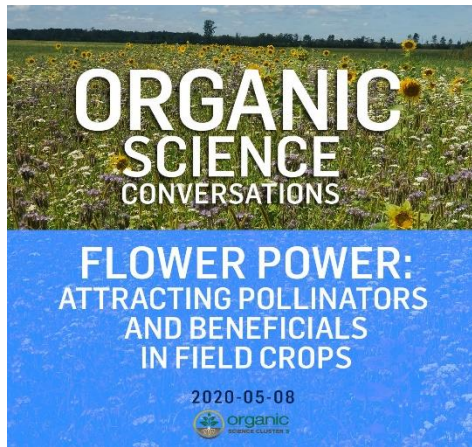
Discover the science behind organic
 farming,
 one podcast at a time

All across Canada, scientists are studying ways that organic farmers can improve their farming practices. The Organic Science Cluster 3 consists of 27 research activities in organic agriculture. Want to know what they're studying?

Fortunately, you don't have to read a scientific journal to find out about current research activities.

The podcast ***Organic Science Conversations*** gives farmers a chance to hear the scientists talk passionately about their research and its significance for Canadian agriculture. The OFC invites you to listen to one podcast a week, or read the transcript of the podcast (in English or French) to learn more about the Organic Science Cluster researchers, their goals and the results they hope to achieve.

Happy listening!



Flower Power Attracting pollinators and beneficials in field crops

At the University of Manitoba, Jason Gibbs is evaluating how strips of flowers can influence the abundance and diversity of beneficial insects on both organic and non-organic farms.

To listen to the conversation with Gibbs, [click here](#).
To read the transcript, [click here](#).

