



OPT Certified Grass-Fed Organic Livestock Program™
Standards and Program Manual for Livestock Production and
Handling Operations©
Version 4.0_2024 Changes At-A-Glance

Distributed December 2023

This document serves as a digest version of the changes from the OPT Grass-Fed Organic Livestock Program Standards and Program Manual v3.0_2023. To review the full standard and program manual please visit our website: [Program Materials \(organicplustrust.com\)](http://organicplustrust.com)

Language that is italicized below is a synopsis of a Standards or Program Manual change.

Exact document modifications are highlighted in yellow.

Standard v4.0 2024 changes

Section II(D)(1)

Reworded to clarify that the Surrender of an OPT's organic certification constitutes the automatic surrender of their OPT Grass-Fed certification.

Section III(B)

An animal Certified or Transitioning to this standard may be placed at a certified organic operation not certified to this standard under the following circumstances:

- 1. Custom grazing of heifers, provided the activity is limited to grazing only, the Certified Operation shall document this occurrence in the Operation's Application and the custom grazer completes a Custom Grazing Affidavit.**
- 2. Animals in Transition according to section III(A)(3) may complete their 90-day transition at the certified organic source farm where the animals were purchased when there is risk of inadequate segregation at the OPT Certified Operation, provided:**
 - a. The animals have been purchased by the OPT Certified Operation and animal IDs are being tracked according to section III(A)(4).**



- b. The source farm will affirm that no grain is being fed to the transitioning cattle and that transitioning cattle are receiving not less than 60% of their Dry Matter Intake from pasture during the grazing season.

Section V(A)(2 & 3)

Grazed vegetative-stage Cereal Grain plants (corn in a pre-tassel stage, soybeans prior to bloom; small and Cereal Grains **at or prior to Late Boot Stage**); and

Harvested Forages and harvested vegetative-stage Cereal Grain crops (corn in a pre-tassel stage, soybeans prior to bloom; small and Cereal Grains **at or prior to Late Boot Stage**).

Section IX(C)(1)

Added clarity around Split Operations and Parallel Operations.

Section XI(C)(2)

Clarity regarding packaged and/or bulk labeled items shall be labeled in accordance with Section XI(A).

Definitions

New terms added: Late Boot Stage; Nonretail container; Parallel Production

Existing Terms changed: Boot Stage; Brassicas; Forage; Grain; Grass(es); Handler; Handle or Handling; Legumes, Small Grains/Cereal

Program Manual Version 4.0 2024 changes At-A-Glance

Section I(A)(2)

Clarity added around animal ownership.

Section II(B)(3)

Split Operation and Parallel Operation language added.

Section (II)(E)(2)(a)(ii)

Desk Audits may be requested by the Certifier or the Certified Operation.

Section (II)(E)(2)(b)

An On-Site Inspection must occur **at least once per calendar year**. If the Operation does not successfully achieve or renew Certification, the OPT Grass-Fed Certificate may be suspended.



An OPT Certifier must immediately report all Certification decisions, including denials, suspensions, surrenders and revocations, to OPT via the OPT Portal. A certified Operation's surrender acknowledgement of their Organic certification may provide

sufficient documentation as the surrender acknowledgement of their grass-fed certification.

Section V(A)(2)

Hybrid male sterile crops, such as Japanese millet, Sterile Corn, Sorghum/Sudangrass and other C4 crops that are not intended to produce Grain, may be grazed and harvested without restriction, provided that the crop purity is maintained. Producers should make an effort to ensure cross pollination does not impact the purity of the sterile crop and, if purity cannot be maintained then time of harvest shall adhere to Standard section V(A)(2)and(3).

Section (V)(C)

Allowed Feedstuffs are listed in Section V(A) of the OPT Grass-Fed Standard.. Boot Stage and Late Boot Stage as defined in Appendix A are also described below.

Targeted Grass stage development in Late Boot Stage¹

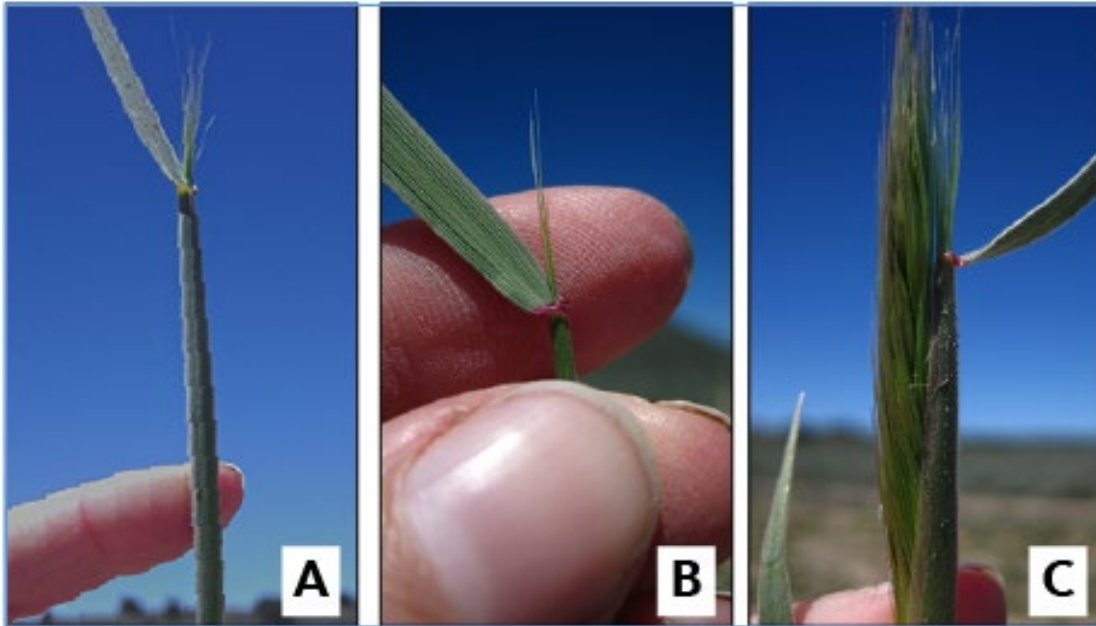
It is recommended to target the latest stage of seedhead development to support grass-fed production. The goal is to limit the amount of starch level present in the seedhead and to maximize forage quality. During the emergence of the seedhead at the late-boot stage, the plant gradually produces a fibrous stem to extend the seedhead. During this process, the protein and energy level of the forage lessens, while the fiber content rises.

Cutting at the late-boot stage produces high-quality hay. Fiber digestibility is still significantly high, and all other nutritional parameters, including sugars, fatty acids and protein level.

The boot stage can be identified by running your fingers up and down the stalks of the plant and feeling for the bulge. You can even open the leaf sheaths to see the forming seed head within. During the boot stage, the tips of awns (stiff, bristle-like structures, often growing from the tip of a seed) begin to emerge from the sheath (Figures A and B).

As the seed head forms within the stalk, it can resemble a leg within a boot. During late boot stage, much of the seed head is visible outside of the sheath, but the seed stalks have not yet begun to flower (Figure C).

¹ Targeted Grass Stage Development in Late Boot Stage guidance courtesy of Dr. Silvia Abel-Caines, DVM, PhD, Staff Ruminant Nutritionist, CROPP Cooperative/Organic Valley.



Section XIII(B)(1)(d)

Allowed at operator risk:

Certified 100% Grass-Fed [Farm, **Ranch, Operation, Dairy Farm**]: *Allowed as long as certified operation is not a split operation.*

Certified Grass-Fed [Farm, **Ranch, Operation, Dairy Farm**]: *Allowed as long as certified operation is not a split operation.*