

TO: Interested Parties  
 FROM: ASPCA  
 RE: Research on Consumer Perceptions of Organic Food Standards for Treatment of Animals  
 DATE: April 2014

Findings from a recent survey of 1,000 consumers nationwide<sup>1</sup> indicate that most consumers of products labeled “organic” (55%) and 47% of all adults believe that the USDA Organic certification indicates humane treatment of farm animals. However, **consumers are assuming higher animal welfare standards than the National Organic Program (NOP) currently requires**, and support for improving those standards is strong.

Assumptions about minimum required animal welfare on certified organic farms differ greatly from the requirements of the NOP.<sup>2</sup>

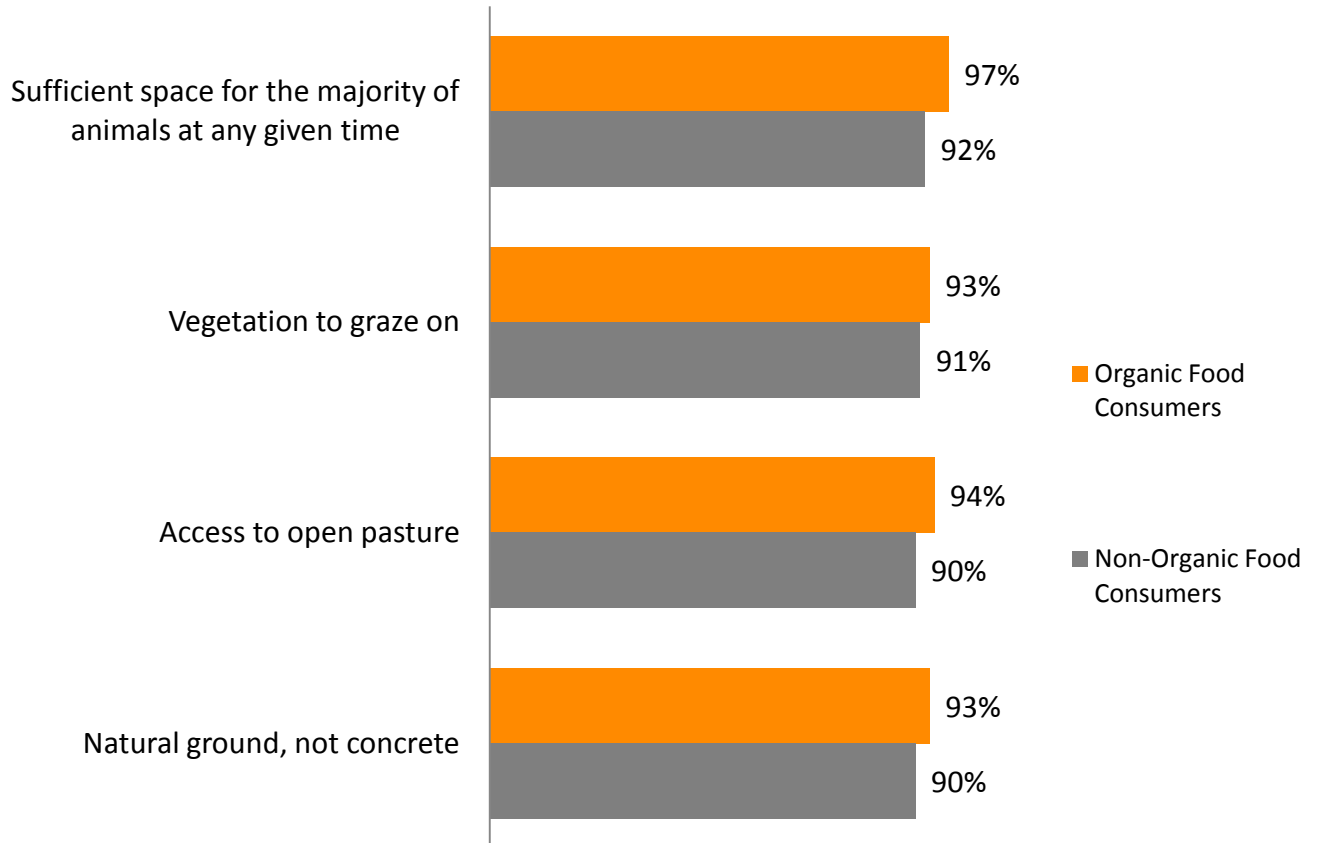
Assumption	% Who Believe True “Organic” Consumers (Gen. Pop)	NOP Requirement
<b>Outdoor Access:</b> <i>All animals have access to outdoor pasture and fresh air throughout the day.</i>	<b>68%</b> (63%)	<b>No clear requirement:</b> The type and length of outdoor access required contain numerous loopholes, and varies greatly from farm to farm.
<b>Space:</b> <i>Animals have significantly more space to move than on non-organic farms.</i>	<b>67%</b> (60%)	<b>No clear requirement:</b> NOP standards do not require a numerically expressed minimum amount of space per animal.
<b>Genetic Engineering:</b> <i>Animals are not bred to grow so fast they have trouble moving and standing.</i>	<b>60%</b> (54%)	<b>No cap on growth rates:</b> NOP standards do not cap growth or production rates. Breeds designed for maximum meat, egg and milk production can be and are used.
<b>Physical Alterations:</b> <i>Animals do not have their beaks and tails cut off.</i>	<b>49%</b> (44%)	<b>Allowed:</b> According to NOP standards, physical alterations such as tail docking, debeaking, and castration may still be practiced.
<b>Inspections:</b> <i>Farms are inspected by the government on a regular basis.</i>	<b>55%</b> (49%)	<b>Only annual, expected inspections:</b> NOP conducts inspections only annually, and those inspections are announced.

<sup>1</sup> **Methodology:** ASPCA designed this survey and it was conducted via phone by Caravan ORC International between October 1 and 3, 2013. The sample of 1,009 adults included 659 respondents that were reached via landline and 350 respondents reached on cell phones, as well as 347 adults who buy half or more of their food products as organics. The data are weighted slightly to ensure it is representative of the general population nationwide. The margin of error for the total sample is +/- 3.1 percentage points.

<sup>2</sup> **Question Wording:** To the best of your knowledge, which of the following facts are true of animals raised on organic farms?

In particular, regardless of their current habits of consumption of organic animal products, consumers support a much higher standard of “access to the outdoors” than is currently in place under the NOP.<sup>3</sup> Right now, the type and length of outdoor access varies greatly from farm to farm, and the FDA has also proposed a guidance that allows small, covered, concrete porches to act as outdoor access for chickens.

### Support for Making Each a Requirement of “Outdoor Access” on Certified Organic Farms



In sum, the data reveals widespread confusion about and misinterpretation of “certified organic” labels on animal products. American consumers assume—and would support—higher animal welfare standards for organic farms certified under the USDA’s National Organic Program.

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<sup>3</sup> **Question Wording:** Organic standards require “access to the outdoors” even if animals live primarily indoors. Do you agree or disagree that the following conditions should be a requirement of outdoor access?

- Sufficient space for the majority of animals at any given time
- Vegetation to graze on
- Access to open pasture
- Natural ground, not concrete

## **About the ASPCA's Farm Animal Welfare Campaign**

Since 1866, the ASPCA has worked to stop cruelty to all animals including those raised for food, and we continue our efforts today to create distress-free lives for the farm animals, through avenues such as legislative and consumer awareness efforts. Nearly all of the over 9 billion farm animals slaughtered for food each year in the U.S. are “broiler” chickens: chickens raised for their meat, rather than their eggs. Almost all of those chickens are raised on industrial farms and suffer horrifically due to selective breeding for fast growth, high breast meat production and poor living conditions. Switching to slower-growing chickens raised in better conditions means happier, healthier birds—but it’s up to us to speak out and demand change. You can take action to help chickens by visiting [TruthAboutChicken.org](https://www.truthaboutchicken.org) and by spreading the Truth About Chicken to friends.