

A Basic Summary of The National Organic Program Manure and Manure-Compost Regulations

Manure is a traditional fertilizer for farms and gardens. It is an excellent and locally available resource. Unfortunately, it often contains human pathogens. Some, like E. coli 0157 and salmonella, can be fatal. The National Organic Standard regulates how manure is used in organic production to prevent microbial contamination of produce.

Summary requirements for manure use: [§205.203(c)]

- If you apply manure within 120 days of the harvest of vegetable crops, it **MUST** be thoroughly composted using a high temperature process (131°–170° F. for up to 15 days). Thorough composting means that adequate mixing and turning of the pile is also done. [§205.203(c)(1)(ii)]
- You *may* apply uncomposted manure within 90 days of harvest to those few vegetables, like sweet corn, whose edible portion does not touch the ground or receive ground splash. [§205.203(c)(1)(iii)]
- Commercial heat-treated manure products have the same unrestricted use as high temperature compost (according to a policy memo published by the NOP on July 19, 2007).
- Applications of worm-composted manure and other animal materials **MUST** comply with the 120- and 90-day rules, unless high temperature composting or other heat treatments have also been used as described above (according to NOP Guidance 5021, July 2011).
- Dried manure and guano have the same restrictions as uncomposted manure.
- Manure tea and compost tea – even if made from high temperature compost – have the same restrictions as uncomposted manure.
- None of these restrictions apply to compost applications to non-food plants or to compost that does not contain manure.

