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Official Notice Number 2010-04 **Accreditations and assessments against IFOAM Norms, Canada Organic Regime and European Regulation (EC) 834/2007**

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Laser beak tipping or Infrared Beak Treatment of Poultry

All organic standards regulate physical alterations or mutilations of livestock animals and in general agree that such alterations be avoided but may be used in cases when the measure is necessary to improve the health, welfare and hygiene of the animal and other animals in the group.

Beak trimming is prohibited under IFOAM standard 5.5.1 but permitted under EU and Canada rules in specific circumstances but should not be carried out routinely ((EC) 889/2008 Article 18 and CAN/CGSB-32-310-2006 (Amended October 2008 Article 6.7.2a)).

Laser beak tipping or infrared beak treatment (IRBT) is a relatively new technique applied in some countries to control beak growth in poultry with the intention of reducing feather pecking and mortality. The IRBT process is a non contact and bloodless procedure so the suggested benefit versus trimming is that there are no cuts or open wounds associated with the process and the precision is much improved. The technique is applicable to turkeys, chickens, and ducks. The IRBT process is administered to day old age birds at the hatchery and is therefore performed by specialist operators before the chicks arrive on the organic farm. The IRBT process works by exposing a defined amount of beak tissues to a controlled amount of infrared energy. The infrared energy is absorbed by the beak basal tissues and hard keratin outer layer. Approximately 15 days after processing, the treated beak tissues slough off or erode away through normal feeding behaviour. The result is a natural looking beak that does not have the sharp hooked tip that cause pecking related injuries and mortality. Although the beak regrows the sharp hook does not return. The treatment has been likened more to filing a finger nail than to a mutilation or physical alteration.

The IOAS recently considered whether laser beak tipping or IRBT should be considered as a mutilation under the above norms and the decision was that it is not. Consequently the IOAS concluded that IRBT is permitted on chicks being purchased by organic units certified under IFOAM Norms, the Canada Organic Regime and (EC) 834/2007.

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