

Video: WaPo investigation raises questions about large dairy farm's compliance with USDA organic standards

[A] closer look at Aurora [Organic Dairy] and other large operations highlights critical weaknesses in the unorthodox inspection system that the Agriculture Department uses to ensure that “organic” food is really organic.

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To enforce the organic rules across this vast industry, the USDA allows farmers to hire and pay their own inspectors to certify them as “USDA Organic.” Industry defenders say enforcement is robust.

But the problems at an entity such as Aurora suggest that even large, prominent players can fall short of standards without detection.

With milk, the critical issue is grazing. Organic dairies are required to allow the cows to graze daily throughout the growing season — that is, the cows are supposed to be grass-fed, not confined to barns and feedlots. This method is considered more natural and alters the constituents of the cows’ milk in ways consumers deem beneficial.

But during visits by The Washington Post to Aurora’s High Plains complex across eight days last year, signs of grazing were sparse, at best. Aurora said its animals were out on pasture day and night, but during most Post visits the number of cows seen on pasture numbered only in the hundreds. At no point was any more than 10 percent of the herd out.

[iframe src=”https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/c/embed/d6a7b12e-1a2b-11e7-8598-9a99da559f9e”]

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion, and analysis. Read full, original post: [Why your ‘organic’ milk may not be organic](#)

For more background on the Genetic Literacy Project, read [GLP on Wikipedia](#)