USDA Organic Standard for Compost

§ 205.203 - Soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard.

(a) The producer must select and implement tillage and cultivation practices that maintain or improve the physical, chemical, and biological condition of soil and minimize soil erosion.

(b) The producer must manage crop nutrients and soil fertility through rotations, cover crops, and the application of plant and animal materials.

(c) The producer must manage plant and animal materials to maintain or improve soil organic matter content in a manner that does not contribute to contamination of crops, soil, or water by plant nutrients, pathogenic organisms, heavy metals, or residues of prohibited substances.

Animal and plant materials include:

(1) Raw animal manure, which must be composted unless it is:
   (i) Applied to land used for a crop not intended for human consumption;
   (ii) Incorporated into the soil not less than 120 days prior to the harvest of a product whose edible portion has direct contact with the soil surface or soil particles; or
   (iii) Incorporated into the soil not less than 90 days prior to the harvest of a product whose edible portion does not have direct contact with the soil surface or soil particles;

(2) Composted plant and animal materials produced though a process that:
   (i) Established an initial C:N ratio of between 25:1 and 40:1; and
   (ii) Maintained a temperature of between 131 °F and 170 °F for 3 days using an in-vessel or static aerated pile system; or
   (iii) Maintained a temperature of between 131 °F and 170 °F for 15 days using a windrow composting system, during which period, the materials must be turned a minimum of five times.

(3) Uncomposted plant materials.