



Meat Grading & Certification Branch

PORK GRADING METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Purpose

This Instruction defines all procedures in the classing, grading, and application of official grademarks of pork carcasses in accordance with the official grade standards. To simplify, the terms "carcass" and "carcasses" also means "side" or "sides."

Applicant Responsibilities

1. Provide Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) approved purple meat branding ink.
2. Make carcasses or sides easily accessible in a manner which eliminates the need for the grader to move them.
3. When required, properly rib carcasses at least 10 minutes prior to grading.
4. Adequately chill carcasses.
5. Adequately illuminate grading area and holding coolers.

Grading Requirements

1. Grade only as carcasses in establishments where the animals are slaughtered or initially chilled, except when an exemption has been granted (See MGC Instruction 106, Procedures for Grading Exemptions).
2. All carcasses must bear the required inspection marks prior to grading or, classing.
3. Retained carcasses or sides shall not be graded without specific authorization from an FSIS inspector.
4. For split carcasses, the final grade will reflect the "highest" of grades as determined from either side.

Procedures

1. Classing.

- a. Barrow, gilt, and sow carcasses are graded, but not identified for class.
- b. Boar and stag carcasses are not graded.

2. Grading.

- a. Grades for barrow and gilt carcasses are based on quality and expected yield of the four lean cuts (ham, loin, picnic shoulder, and Boston butt). Grades U.S. 1 - 4 and U.S. Utility.
- b. Quality characteristics (acceptable or unacceptable) are determined by the loin eye muscle at the 10th rib. If not ribbed, other exposed major muscle surfaces can be used, or determine indirectly based on the quality-indicating characteristics that are evident in the carcass (firmness of fat and lean, feathering between ribs, and color of lean).
- c. Carcasses must have a belly with sufficient thickness to be suitable for bacon production to be considered acceptable in quality.
- d. Grades for sow carcasses are based on differences in yields of lean cuts and of fat cuts and differences in quality of cuts. Grades U.S. 1 - 3, Medium, and Cull.
- e. Soft, or oily sow carcasses can be graded provided they are identified as soft or oily along with the grade.
- f. Do Not Grade:
 - 1. In natural light, on loading docks, at cooler doors, on rails from which carcasses may be directly loaded for shipment, or any other area that does not provide an ample opportunity for supervisory review prior to shipment.
 - 2. If the cut surface of ribeye is so dried, aged, or distorted by sawing or refacing that the true color and texture cannot be determined.

3. Identification Methods.

- a. Only Meat Grading and Certification (MGC) Branch employees and officially-licensed employees may apply grade identification stamps. Plant personnel may apply grade identification stamps under the direct supervision of MGC Branch personnel. Each instance must be approved in advance by the Assistant Director.
- b. Can use the Yield Grade Band Applicator to identify carcasses.
- c. Rollerbranding is not applicable to pork carcasses.

- d. Applicants have the option to stamp specific wholesale cuts (ham, loin Boston Butt, and shoulder).
 - e. Grademark Location for Pork (Exhibit A) shows proper location for grademarks on the carcass.
- 4. Regrading.
 - a. See MGC Instruction 506, Removal of Incorrect Grademarks.

References

1. Official United States Standards for Grades of Pork Carcasses.
2. Title 7, SubtitleB, ChapterI, Subchapter C, Part 54. Meats, Prepared Meats, and Meat Products (Grading, Certification and Standards).

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Grademark Location for Pork

Grades U.S. 1-4

① Yield stamp and initials centered on either side of the back anywhere anterior to the tail and posterior to the shoulder.

U.S. Utility, Medium, and Cull

① Grade band and initials centered on either side of the back anywhere anterior to the tail and posterior to the shoulder.

