



MEAT GRADING AND CERTIFICATION BRANCH QUALITY MANUAL

4.1 Management Responsibilities

4.1.1 Quality Policy

Responsibility for establishing the quality policy rests with senior management of the Meat Grading and Certification (MGC) Branch. The responsibility for implementing this policy extends throughout all levels of management as it pertains to the development, implementation, communication, and maintenance of the quality objectives, quality plans, and the Quality Management System.

4.1.2 Organization (See MGC Instruction 801, Quality System Organizational Chart)

4.1.2.1 Responsibility and Authority

The responsibility and authority of personnel who manage, perform, and verify work affecting quality is defined and documented for personnel who need the authority to:

- a. Initiate action to prevent the occurrence of any nonconformities relating to service quality.
- b. Identify and record any problems.
- c. Initiate, recommend, or provide solutions through designated channels.
- d. Verify the implementation of solutions.
- e. Control the performance of services until the nonconforming condition has been corrected.

4.1.2.2 Resources

The MGC Branch allocates adequate resources and qualified personnel to ensure that verification activities can be handled in a thorough, accurate, and timely manner. Pursuant to this policy, periodic internal quality audits are conducted to identify and initiate corrective action in areas where nonconformance with this policy may exist.

4.1.2.3 Management Representative

The Quality Manager has the defined responsibility and authority for ensuring that controls required by the ISO 9002 Quality Management Standards are properly implemented and maintained. Responsibilities include liaison with external bodies on matters related to the Quality Management System. The Quality Manager is responsible for reporting on the performance of the Quality Management System to MGC Branch senior management for review and as a basis for improving the Quality Management System.

Other responsibilities relating to the Quality Management System are distributed as follows:

Chief

- Maintains ultimate responsibility for quality.
- Approves all process control and quality management procedures.
- Delegates authority for approval in his or her absence.
- Commits adequate resources for the efficient and expeditious operation of the Quality Management System.
- Designates an MGC Branch Quality Manager.

Assistant Chief

- Performs quality management activities as delegated by the Chief.
- Participates in annual reviews of the Quality Management System.

Grading and Certification Director

- Participates in annual reviews of the Quality Management System.
- Establishes and maintains procedures for reviewing all contracts to assure completeness, determines MGC Branch's ability to fulfill requests for service, and establishes procedures for documenting contract reviews.
- Conducts quality management activities as delegated by the Assistant Chief.
- Participates in annual reviews of the Quality Management System.

Quality Manager

- Reports directly to the Assistant Chief regarding all Quality Management System concerns as a basis for improvement of the Quality Management System.
- Ensures that a Quality Management System is established, implemented, and maintained in accordance with ISO 9002.
- Coordinates all formal quality management reviews.
- Directs or supervises internal quality system audits.
- Conducts training for quality system auditors.
- Writes or directs the writing of all Quality Management System procedures.
- Supervises the maintenance of quality system records.

Assistant Director (AD)

- Reviews all quality management procedures and documentation within area boundaries twice annually, recommends corrective action, and documents reviews.
- Reviews all contracts for service and documents reviews of each contract per Office of Field Operations (OFO) procedures.
- Prepares reports for presentation to the annual quality system review.

Supervisory Meat Grader (SMG)

- Coordinates the development and installation of all local procedures in the establishment quality manuals.
- Maintains or supervises the maintenance of quality manuals and other documentation in each plant assigned.
- Participates in internal audits as directed by the Quality Manager.
- Prepares summary of quality system and process control improvements submitted by graders including actions taken and submits to AD for inclusion in annual quality system review.

Grader

- Conducts quality management activities as described in documented quality management procedures.
- Develops and documents local procedures.
- Continually reviews local procedures for adequacy and provides suggestions for

improvement.

- Provides input for annual Quality Management System reviews.
- Participates in internal audits as directed by the Quality Manager.

4.1.3 Management Review

The Quality Management System is reviewed periodically by senior management to assess the effectiveness of the system and to determine whether any changes in procedure, method, or philosophy are considered necessary to meet current and future needs. Details of methods, responsibilities, dates, and documentation are defined in written procedures. The reviews are documented, recorded, and maintained for future reference. The following items are covered at the reviews:

- a. Internal audits and corrective actions resulting from such audits.
- b. Third party audits and associated corrective actions.
- c. Customer and employee comments and suggestions.

4.2 Quality System

4.2.1 General

The MGC Branch Quality Management System serves as a means of assuring that services conform to specified requirements. It establishes the requirements for:

- a. The preparation of documented quality system procedures and instructions in accordance with the requirements of the ISO 9002 International Quality Standards as described in the Quality System Structure.
- b. The effective implementation of the documented quality system procedures and instructions.

4.2.2 Quality System Procedures

The specific responsibilities for performing necessary activities are detailed in the MGC Branch's work instructions. When specified, records are maintained to demonstrate the effectiveness of the Quality Management System. It is the responsibility of the Quality Manager to ensure the review of these documents and records, through internal quality audits, and to verify the effective implementation of this system.

4.2.3 Quality Planning

The MGC Branch has defined and documented procedures for quality management. These procedures include:

- a. The preparation of quality plans for individual establishments and programs.

- b. The identification and acquisition of any controls, processes, inspection equipment, and skills that may be needed to achieve the required service through the preparation of Individual Development Plans (IDP's).
- c. Ensuring the compatibility of the services, processes, inspection, test procedures, and applicable documentation.
- d. The updating of quality control, inspection, and testing techniques.
- e. The identification of any measurement requirements involving capabilities exceeding the known state of the art.
- f. The identification of suitable verification at appropriate stages in the process of performing services.
- g. The clarification of standards of acceptability for all features and requirements including those which contain a subjective element.

4.3 Contract Review

4.3.1 General

The MGC Branch has established procedures by which contractual agreements between users and the MGC Branch are clearly understood, documented, reviewed, and approved.

4.3.2 Review

The MGC Branch (Customer Service Director) reviews contracts and requests for services upon receipt to assure that the requirements are understood and can be fully met. Requests for service are reviewed by the MGC Branch to confirm:

- a. Personnel availability.
- b. Service availability.
- c. Specification applicability.

4.3.3 Records

The MGC Branch documents and maintains records of all contract reviews in accordance with Section 4.16, Control of Quality Records.

4.4 Design Control

The MGC Branch does not, at this time, include design control in the scope of their documented quality system. At such a time when design control is to be included, the MGC Branch will meet the requirements of the standard with respect to this section.

4.5 Document and Data Control

4.5.1 General

The MGC Branch maintains documented procedures to control documents and data that relate to the requirements specified in the Quality Management System. These procedures include documentation required for the achievement of product quality and the effective operation of the Quality Management System.

4.5.2 Document Approval and Issue

The Quality Manager ensures that all documents used in the Quality Management System are properly identified and controlled. Such documents are reviewed and approved by the Chief or Assistant Chief prior to issue. The Quality Manager assures current issues of relevant documents are made available at locations requiring such documents for the achievement and maintenance of service quality.

This documentation consists of, but is not limited to:

- a. Standards and specifications.
- b. Purchase orders or contractual documents.
- c. Inspection and test data.
- d. Work instructions.
- e. Calibration data.
- f. External standards and specifications.

The Quality Manager maintains a master list identifying the current issue status of documents. This list is available, either in hard copy or by electronic media, to all personnel performing service. Only documents that appear on this list are used in the performance of quality-related activities. Obsolete documents are destroyed or clearly identified and removed from point of use.

4.5.3 Document changes

Document changes are reviewed and approved by the Chief. Documents such as program and product specifications provided by users of the service are also subject to approval through the Livestock and Meat Standardization Branch. The issuing authority has access to, and reviews, relevant background information when undertaking a review and approval of document changes. Where practical, the nature of a document change is identified on the document or attached control sheet. Details of methods, responsibilities, and documentation are defined in the MGC Branch Instructions.

4.6 Purchasing

The MGC Branch does not currently include Purchasing in the scope of their quality system. Should this ever be included, the MGC Branch will meet the requirements of the standard.

4.7 Control of Customer Supplied Product

The MGC Branch does not currently include Customer Supplied Product in the scope of their quality system. Should this ever be included, the MGC Branch will meet the requirements of the standard.

4.8 Product Identification and Traceability

The MGC Branch has documented procedures for the identification of services through all applicable phases of production and marketing. Markings used to identify services and evaluated products include, but are not limited to:

- a. Roller brands.
- b. Stamps.
- c. Seals.
- d. Tags.
- e. Certificates.
- f. Labeled bags or other printed containers.

Any special identification or traceability requirements not listed above are contained in individual specifications or standards.

4.9 Process Control

All services provided by the MGC Branch that directly affect quality are performed under planned and controlled procedures. Controlled procedures include:

- a. Written work instructions or daily checklists (quality plans) where their absence could adversely affect quality.
- b. Use of approved equipment under suitable working conditions.

- c. Compliance with applicable standards, specifications, and other approved, documented procedures.
- d. The approval of processes and equipment, as appropriate.
- e. Criteria for workmanship which are clearly defined in the form of written standards, representative samples, and illustrations.
- f. Suitable maintenance of equipment to assure accuracy in providing service.

The requirements for any special qualifications for performing services are described in Section 4.18, Training. Records are maintained for qualified processes, equipment, and personnel as documented in Section 4.16, Control of Quality Records.

4.10 Inspection and Testing

4.10.1 General

In-process inspection and testing requirements are documented in the MGC Branch Instructions and procedures. These requirements include either inspection and test, or incorporate the use of in-process monitoring.

4.10.2 Final Inspection and Testing

The MGC Branch has procedures to assure that service quality is evaluated prior to release of evaluated or certified products. Procedures are in place to provide for immediate retention and correction of nonconforming services.

4.10.3 Inspection and Test Records

The MGC Branch maintains inspection and test records in accordance with Section 4.16, Control of Quality Records.

4.11 Control of Inspection, Measuring, and Test Equipment

4.11.1 General

The MGC Branch has documented procedures to control or verify the calibration of inspection, measuring, and test equipment used in providing service. Equipment is used in a manner which ensures that measurement uncertainty is known and is consistent with the required measurement capability. Technical data relating to the verification of accuracy and calibration of test equipment is made available when required by contract specifications or users of the service.

4.11.2 Control Procedures

The MGC Branch has documented procedures to determine measurements to be made, the accuracy required, and the appropriate equipment to be used. All test equipment that may affect quality is identified, calibrated, and adjusted at prescribed intervals against known nationally or internationally recognized standards.

MGC Branch Instructions define procedures for the calibration of measuring, inspection, and test equipment. Procedures include equipment type, unique identification, location, frequency of checks, check method, acceptance criteria, and the action to be taken when results are unsatisfactory.

The MGC Branch has documented procedures to:

- a. Verify that inspection, measuring, and test equipment provided by users of the service are adequately identified with regard to calibration status.
- b. Verify or maintain calibration records for inspections, measuring, and test equipment.
- c. Assess and document the validity of previous inspection and test results when inspection, measuring, and test equipment is found to be out of calibration.
- d. Ensure tests and calibrations are conducted in an environment that is suitable for the nature of the measurements being carried out.
- e. Protect and safeguard equipment from adjustments that could invalidate calibration settings.

4.12 Inspection and Test Status

The MGC Branch Instructions specify procedures for identifying the inspection and test status of products associated with MGC Branch services.

4.13 Control of Nonconforming Product

4.13.1 General

The MGC Branch has documented procedures to identify and control services and associated products that do not conform with established guidelines. These procedures provide for the identification, documentation, evaluation, segregation, and disposition of nonconforming services and associated products.

4.13.2 Nonconforming Product Review and Disposition

The MGC Branch has documented procedures defining the authority for reviewing and determining the disposition of nonconforming services and associated products. Nonconformances may be:

- a. Corrected to meet the specified requirements.
- b. Accepted with or without correction.
- c. Rejected without replacement.

Corrected services are reevaluated in accordance with established written procedures in MGC Instruction 510, Evaluation and Certification of Carcass Data, Grades, and Weight.

4.14 Corrective and Preventive Action

4.14.1 General

The MGC Branch has documented corrective and preventive action procedures to assure that all services provided meet contract and specification requirements. Corrective and preventive actions taken are appropriate to the magnitude of problems and commensurate to the risks encountered. The MGC Branch implements and records any changes in the documented procedures resulting from corrective or preventive action.

4.14.2 Corrective Action

Procedures for corrective action include:

- a. Effective handling of user complaints and reports of service nonconformance.
- b. Investigating the cause of nonconformities relating to service performance and recording the results of these investigations.
- c. Determining corrective action needed to eliminate the cause of nonconformity.
- d. Applying controls to ensure that corrective action is taken, and that it is effective.

4.14.3 Preventive Action

Procedures for preventive action include:

- a. Use of appropriate sources of information such as process and work instructions which affect service quality, concessions, audit results, quality records, and customer comments to detect, analyze, and eliminate potential causes of nonconformity.
- b. Determining the steps needed to deal with any problems requiring preventive action.
- c. Initiating preventive action and applying controls to ensure that it is effective.
- d. Ensuring that relevant information on actions taken, including changes to procedures, is submitted for management review.

4.15 Handling, Storage, Packaging, Preservation, and Delivery

The MGC Branch has guidelines for assuring service delivery is consistent with contractual and related requirements.

4.16 Control of Quality Records

4.16.1 General

The MGC Branch has documented procedures for identification, access, storage, maintenance, and disposition of quality records that demonstrate the performance of the Quality Management System. The essential components of this system include, but are not limited to:

- a. Production records.
- b. Sample plans.
- c. Shipping records.
- d. Condition of container documents.
- e. Correlation reports.
- f. Cooler audit reports.
- g. Internal audit report.
- h. Training records.
- i. Requests for service.
- j. Contract review records.
- k. Management review records.

4.16.2 Retention

Quality records are legible and are stored in such a way that they are readily retrievable in

facilities that provide a suitable environment to minimize deterioration or damage and to prevent loss. Retention times of quality records are established and recorded.

4.17 Internal Quality Audits

MGC Branch Instructions specify procedures for planning and implementing internal quality audits to assess compliance with procedures, identify non-conformances, and initiate corrective action where required. Internal quality audits are scheduled on the basis of the status and importance of the activity to be audited. Audits are conducted by qualified personnel independent of those having direct responsibility for the activity being audited. Results of audits are recorded and brought to the attention of the person responsible for the activity being audited, and are reviewed by senior management. Managers responsible for the identified system deficiencies take timely corrective action. Follow-up audits and the effectiveness of corrective action taken are recorded.

4.18 Training

The MC Branch has documented procedures for identifying the minimum training and experience requirements for all positions related to service quality. Personnel performing specific tasks are qualified on the basis of appropriate education, training, and/or experience. Appropriate records of personnel qualifications are maintained by the Training Officer.

4.19 Servicing

This requirement of the standard does not apply to the MGC Branch Quality Management System at this time. If the system requirements change to include servicing activities, the MGC Branch will meet this requirement.

4.20 Statistical Techniques

The MGC Branch identifies the source of and basis for statistical techniques used. These sources are identified in individual specifications and procedures as applicable. The results of all statistical analyses are properly documented and evaluated to identify levels of performance and initiate corrective action where appropriate.

4.21 Equal Employment Opportunity

The MGC Branch has procedures to assure that quality management activities reflect MGC Branch objectives for Equal Employment Opportunity and workforce diversity. These procedures are reviewed by the Chief as part of the annual quality system reviews. Records of activities and management reviews as they relate to this section are maintained as part of the quality records.

4.22 Cost of Quality

The MGC Branch reviews all quality procedures and revisions thereof to assure they are cost effective. Cost of quality reviews take place as a part of management's annual quality system review and as changes to the system are considered. Records of all reviews are maintained as part of the quality records.

4.23 Employee Involvement

The MGC Branch has procedures to assure the opportunity for all employees to actively participate in the development, maintenance, and revision of quality system procedures. These procedures are reviewed and revised as necessary as a part of management's annual quality system review. Records of all reviews and activities in this area are maintained as part of the quality records. Participation in quality system reviews, development, or revision is recorded in the employee's training and experience records.

4.24 Continuous Improvement

The MGC Branch has procedures to assure that MGC Branch quality management and quality system procedures are continually improved. These procedures are designed to assure that:

- a. Existing processes are reviewed and revised on a regular basis.
- b. Customer needs are considered when revising processes.
- c. Ambitious goals are maintained and pursued.

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