



LAMB, YEARLING MUTTON, AND MUTTON GRADING **METHODS AND PROCEDURES**

Purpose

This instruction defines all procedures in the classing, grading, and application of official grademarks of lamb, yearling mutton, and mutton 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 easily accessible, which includes presenting racks supporting lamb carcasses in a manner that eliminates the need for the grader to move them.
3. Adequately chill carcasses.
4. Adequately illuminate grading area and holding coolers.
5. Assure carcasses have no more than 1.0 percent kidney and pelvic fat.
6. Carcass weight must be prominently displayed to allow easy reading.

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).
2. All carcasses must bear the required inspection marks prior to grading or classing.
3. Retained carcasses shall not be graded without specific authorization from a Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) employee.
4. Lamb carcasses may be graded in a partially chilled condition when necessary to complete shipments or to provide additional cooler space.
 - a. Borderline lambs will not be graded if the proper yield grade cannot be established.
 - b. No lamb will be graded that has potential for a different quality grade with additional chill.
 - c. Applicants may not require graders to defend their grade placement of partially

chilled lambs nor request a supervisor review them.

5. Ovine carcasses cannot have more than 1.0 percent of their carcass weight in kidney and pelvic fat. If more than 1.0 percent is present, the excess fat must be removed prior to grading.

Procedures

1. Classing.

- a. Lamb does not require class identification.
- b. Yearling mutton and mutton require class identification directly above the quality grade stamp.
- c. The proper location of quality identification stamps for ovine is found in the attached Exhibit.

2. Do Not Grade:

- a. In natural light.
- b. On loading docks.
- c. At cooler doors.
- d. On rails from which carcasses may be directly loaded for shipment.
- e. Any other area that does not provide an ample opportunity for supervisory review prior to shipment (carcasses may be roller branded in loading areas if they have been previously quality and yield grade identified).
- f. If external fat has been trimmed to alter the final yield grade.
- g. If a carcass has potential for a different grade with additional chill.

3. Special Circumstances Concerning Grading and Removal of Yield Grades:

- a. If external fat or lean is removed, grade only if an accurate grade determination can be made.
- b. Yield grade may only be removed if external fat (natural or trimmed) does not exceed 0.25 inch in thickness at any point. In this instance, the USDA grade may consist of the quality grade only.

4. Identification Methods.

- a. Only MGC Branch employees and officially licensed employees may apply grade identification stamps. Under special circumstances, plant personnel may apply grade identification stamps under the direct supervision of MGC Branch personnel.

Each instance must be approved in advance by the Area Supervisor.

- b. Carcasses shipped outside the plant location or fabricated without grade label bags must bear the appropriate designated roller brand.
- c. Options for carcasses graded and fabricated at the same plant location:
 - 1. Final identification of carcass with preliminary identification stamp only (requires use of grade label bags and a grade label approval program).
 - 2. Preliminary identification and roller brand entire carcass.

5. Roller branding.

- a. Graders must personally apply or directly supervise application of roller brands.
- b. Roller brand individual wholesale cuts, when requested, prior to separation from carcass. Roller brand on cuts must begin and end at approximate wholesale cut separation line.

6. Do Not Roller brand:

- a. If area to be roller branded is obstructed by private tags, order tags, etc.
- b. If more than 50% of the area to be roller branded is too wet to retain a legible roller brand.
- c. Over the inspection stamp or preliminary grade identification stamp.
- d. Over bruised or mutilated areas. In these instances, apply roller brand to the edge of the nearest unmutilated or unbruised portion of the wholesale cut.

7. Rebranding.

- a. Carcasses or cuts must exhibit previously applied, legible grademarks (pop stamps and/or roller brand).
- b. Positive grade identity must be maintained throughout the process.

References

- 1. Official United States Standards for Grades of Lamb, Yearling Mutton, and Mutton Carcasses, <http://www.ams.usda.gov/LSPprogram>
- 2. Title 7, Subtitle B, Chapter I, Subchapter C, Part 54. Meats, Prepared Meats, and Meat Products, http://www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr/cfrhtml_00/Title_7/7cfr54_00.html.

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