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**USDA SPECIFICATION FOR CERTIFICATION OF BEEF CARCASS  
QUALITY AND YIELD CHARACTERISTICS OF OFFICIALLY GRADED BEEF**

This specification is for certification by an Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) agent of U.S. Prime, Choice, Select, Standard, Commercial, or Utility steer, heifer, or cow beef carcasses which meet the phenotypic requirements of USDA Specification for Characteristics of Cattle Eligible for Approved Beef Programs Claiming Angus Influence (GLA), and (b) meet the following set of requirements:

1. Marbling score of:
  - a. HQB Angus Beef, Prime – Full range of marbling allowable in the Prime grade for the corresponding A or B maturity;
  - b. HQB Angus Beef, Choice – Full range of marbling allowable in the Choice grade for the corresponding A or B maturity;
  - c. HQB Angus Beef, Select – Slight 00 to Slight 99 within A maturity only;
  - d. HQB Angus Beef - A marbling score of Slight 00 or higher;
2. Medium or fine marbling texture;
3. Practically free (not detracting from visual quality) of capillary rupture in the ribeye muscle;
4. Moderately thick or thicker muscling and tends to be moderately wide and thick in relation to their length; and
5. No hump exceeding 2 inches in height.
6. Free of “dark cutting” characteristics.

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Items 1 shall be determined in accordance with the “Official United States Standards for Grades of Carcass Beef.”

Item 2 shall be evaluated using the USDA-AMS-LS-SB-02 Marbling Texture card.

Item 4, muscle thickness, is evaluated by averaging the thickness of the various parts, considering not only the proportion (%) each part is of the carcass but also the general value of each part. Superior muscle thickness implies a high proportion of meat to bone and a high proportion of the weight of the carcass in the more valuable parts.

Item 5 shall be measured from a line formed by the extension of the top line (including the fat) and measuring the lean muscle (excluding the fat) perpendicular to that line in the center of the hump.

**CERTIFICATION:**

An AMS agent will certify acceptable carcasses. Carcasses to be examined for compliance with the requirements of this specification shall be clearly identified when presented to the AMS agent for certification. Procedures for identification, certification, the removal of preliminary identification marks (or other methods of control) from non-qualifying carcasses, and control of certified carcasses shall be in accordance with established Quality Assessment Division (QAD) procedures.

The costs of all grading and certification services performed by the AMS agent involving examinations, supervision, official documentation, and related services shall be borne by the person, group, or plant requesting the service.

**LABELING:**

Labeling of HQB Angus Beef products shall be in compliance with Food Safety and Inspection Service regulations and policy guidelines, QAD instructions and Livestock, Poultry and Seed Program Policy Standardization Procedure 2.