



Meat Grading & Certification Branch

**Alternative Methods for Evaluating Ovine Spool/Break Joints
for Carcass Classification**

Purpose

The purpose of this program is to reduce carcass contamination by allowing applicants to remove both cannon bones (trotters) during the slaughtering process.

Authority

- The United States Standards for Grades of Lamb, Yearling Mutton, and Mutton Carcasses, Title 7, Chapter I, Part 54, Sections 54.121 – 54.127 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR).
- The Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (60 Statute 1087; 7 U.S.C. 1621 et seq.) as amended.

Scope

Through this program, applicants assure Federal Meat Graders (Graders) that the evaluation of critical grade determining factors of ovine carcasses are in compliance with the requirements of the "Differentiation Between Lamb, Yearling Mutton and Mutton Carcasses" section contained in the United States Standards for Grades of Lamb, Yearling Mutton, and Mutton Carcasses.

Program Requirements

Development

Applicants must develop a program that clearly identifies and segregates ovine carcasses into the following two groups, (1) carcasses that are eligible to be classified as lamb and (2) carcasses that are ineligible to be classified as lamb. Please refer to the Carcass Classification section of this Instruction for further guidelines. Applicants must then present the carcasses in a manner that allows a Grader to determine the final classification and grade of the carcasses in accordance with the official standards.

Approval

Applicants must submit their Ovine Carcass Evaluation Program proposal to the Livestock and Seed (LS) Program Standardization Branch for approval. The applicant's program must identify the procedures for trotter evaluation, including identification, segregation, and traceability of all carcasses, as well as employee training plans and related materials, and management contacts.

Send program proposals to: USDA, MRP, AMS, LSP, Standardization Branch
 Attn: Mr. Martin E. O'Conner, Chief
 1400 Independence Ave, S.W.
 STOP 0248, Room 2603 - S
 Washington, D.C. 20250-0248
 Phone: (202) 690-4111
 Facsimile: (202) 720-1112

Training

Supervisory Meat Graders or Graders will train the Quality Assurance (QA) Manager to evaluate spool/break joints in accordance with the Differentiation Between Lamb, Yearling Mutton, and Mutton Carcasses section of the United States Standards for Grades of Lamb, Yearling Mutton, and Mutton Carcasses. The LS Program may provide visual aids for the training process or applicants may use independent training materials, as long as the training materials have received LS Standardization Branch approval.

Once the QA Manager is properly trained, they will receive Meat Grading and Certification (MGC) Branch certification, which permits them to train, document, and evaluate plant personnel responsible for monitoring the Ovine Carcass Evaluation Program.

Recertification

The MGC Branch requires that QA Managers and plant personnel responsible for monitoring the Ovine Carcass Evaluation Program be recertified on a yearly basis.

Procedures

Applicants will:

1. Ensure that a certified QA Manager properly trains plant personnel to evaluate spool/break joints in accordance with the Differentiation Between Lamb, Yearling Mutton, and Mutton Carcasses section of the United States Standards for Grades of Lamb, Yearling Mutton and Mutton Carcasses.
2. Provide the MGC Branch with a list of plant personnel trained to monitor this program.

3. Identify, segregate and present ovine carcasses according to the criteria listed in the **Program Requirements, Development** section of this Instruction.
4. Provide the Grader(s) with the number of animals slaughtered per day.
5. Provide video equipment capable of monitoring the trained plant personnel's evaluation of the ovine carcasses. The video equipment must be capable of utilizing date and time stamp technology to ensure process evaluation.
6. Maintain at least a 30-day supply of recorded spool/break joint evaluations. This video will allow internal and supervisory reviews of the program.

Supervisory Meat Graders will:

1. Develop local procedures for program implementation in accordance with this instruction.
2. Create or incorporate procedures for the program into the plant's MGC Branch Quality Plan.
3. Train and certify QA Managers to evaluate spool/break joints in accordance with the Differentiation Between Lamb, Yearling Mutton, and Mutton Carcasses section of the United States Standards for Grades of Lamb, Yearling Mutton, and Mutton Carcasses.
4. Recertify QA Managers once per year.

Graders will:

1. In the absence of the SMG, train and certify QA Managers to evaluate spool/break joints in accordance with the Differentiation Between Lamb, Yearling Mutton, and Mutton Carcasses section of the United States Standards for Grades of Lamb, Yearling Mutton, and Mutton Carcasses.
2. In the absence of the SMG, recertify QA Managers once per year.
3. Ensure that approved plant personnel are monitoring the program.
4. Maintain a list of plant personnel approved to monitor the program.
5. Ensure QA Managers understand the evaluation criteria.
6. Review carcass evaluation videos according to the Evaluation Frequency Table for compliance with Program requirements utilizing randomly selected times.
7. Score defects according to the Carcass Classification and Defect sections of this Instruction.
8. Assign and enforce penalties according to the Penalties section of this Instruction.

Carcass Evaluation

Graders will segregate the slaughter time into thirty-minute intervals and evaluate carcasses for five minutes per selected interval. Graders will complete the Ovine Carcass Evaluation Worksheet, Exhibit A, by selecting random evaluation periods based on the number of animals slaughtered in one day.

Evaluation Frequency Table

Total Ovine Slaughtered per Shift	Number of Evaluation Periods
0 – 600	2
601 – 1200	3
1201 – 1800	4
1801 – 2400	5
2401 – 2600	6
2601 – 3600	7
3601 – 4200	8
4201 – Over	9

Carcass Classification

Since the standards allow carcasses with at least one perfect break joint to be eligible to be classified as lamb, the following procedures will be adopted to implement the intent of this Instruction. Prior to offering carcasses for final classification and official grading, applicants must classify, identify, and segregate carcasses into two (2) groups according to trotter type. Missing trotters are considered to be imperfect break joints. Graders will evaluate the remaining maturity factors of the offered carcasses to determine final classification.

- Group 1 Eligible Lamb Carcasses; will consist of carcasses with at least one perfect break joint.
- Group 2 Eligible Yearling Mutton and/or Mutton Carcasses; will consist of carcasses with two imperfect break joints, two spool joints, or combination of imperfect break joints, spool joints, or missing trotters.

Defects

- Major* – A major defect is considered to be any carcass with a spool joint on both trotters (or one spool joint, if only one trotter is available for evaluation) identified for the lamb classification.
- Minor* – A minor defect is considered to be any carcass with imperfect break joints on both trotters (or one imperfect break joint, if only one trotter is available for evaluation) identified for the lamb classification.

Penalties

1. If **either one major defect OR more than one minor defect** is scored on a single production day,

The Grader will:

- a. Record the tape number and time code(s) where the defect(s) was observed.
- b. Notify the QA Manager of the defect(s) observed.

The Applicant will:

- c. Review tapes with Grader to verify defects.
- d. Retrain the individual(s) responsible for monitoring the portion of the program where the defect was observed.
- e. Provide the Grader with documentation supporting that the monitoring individual's retraining has been successfully completed. This must occur prior to the continuation of program monitoring.

2. If **more than one major defect** is scored on a single production day,

The Grader will:

- a. Record the tape number and time codes where the defect(s) was observed.
- b. Notify the plant Quality Assurance Manager of the defect(s) observed.
- c. Review tapes with QA Manager to illustrate defects.
- d. Determine carcass classification under the conventional evaluation protocols of all carcasses for the next 10 slaughter days. This activity will require an additional grader to evaluate the break joint criteria on the kill floor.

The Applicant will:

- e. Review tapes with Grader to verify defects.
 - f. Retrain the individual(s) responsible for monitoring the program.
 - g. Provide documentation to support that the monitoring individual's retraining has been completed prior to continuation of monitoring.
3. If **either one major defect OR more than one minor defect** is scored each day for three consecutive days,

The Grader will:

- a. Record the tape number and time codes, where the defect(s) was observed.
- b. Notify the plant Quality Assurance Manager of the defect(s) observed.
- c. Review tapes with QA Manager to illustrate defects.
- d. Determine carcass classification under the conventional evaluation protocols of all carcasses for the next 20 slaughter days. This activity will require an additional grader to evaluate the break joint criteria on the kill floor.

The Applicant will:

- e. Review tapes with Grader to verify defects.
 - f. Retrain the individual(s) responsible for monitoring the program.
 - g. Provide documentation to support that the monitoring individual's retraining has been completed, prior to continuation of monitoring.
4. If the Grader is required to evaluate break joints on more than two occasions **(penalties, 2d or 3d)** within 180 calendar days, the program will be suspended. The suspension will remain in effect for at least 180 calendar days and until the MGC Branch determines that the plant has adequately modified its procedures and has fully re-trained employees to assure integrity of the program. In the interim, an additional Grader will be required to evaluate the break joints of all carcasses on the slaughter floor to ensure compliance with the Standards.

Click on document to
view



Exhibit A

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

OVINE CARCASS EVALUATION WORKSHEET

Plant 	Sheet 	of
Date 	Shift 	Grader EQC
Tape Number 	Tape Date 	Tape Time
Total Slaughtered 	Evaluation 	of

No.	Trotter				No.	Trotter			
	Group 1		Group 2			Group 1		Group 2	
	1st	2nd	1st	2nd		1st	2nd	1st	2nd
1					26				
2					27				
3					28				
4					29				
5					30				
6					31				
7					32				
8					33				
9					34				
10					35				
11					36				
12					37				
13					38				
14					39				
15					40				
16					41				
17					42				
18					43				
19					44				
20					45				
21					46				
22					47				
23					48				
24					49				
25					50				

Major Defect Total 	Minor Defect Total
---	---

Evaluation Frequency Table

Total Ovine Slaughtered per Shift	Number of Evaluation Periods
0-600	2
601-1200	3
1201-1800	4
1801-2400	5
2401-3000	6
3001-3600	7
3601-4200	8
4201-Over	9

Definitions

Group 1	Carcasses with at least one perfect break joint.
Group 2	Carcasses with two imperfect break joints, two spool joints, or combination of imperfect break joints, spool joints, or missing trotters.
Major Defect	Any carcass with a spool joint on both trotters (or one spool joint, if only one trotter is available for evaluation) that is identified for lamb classification.
Minor Defect	Any carcass with imperfect break joints on both trotters (or one imperfect break joint, if only one trotter is available for evaluation) that is identified for lamb classification.