



GENERAL PRODUCT CERTIFICATION PROCEDURES

Purpose

This instruction defines policies and general product certification procedures for examining products.

Policies

Specifications must be approved by the Livestock and Seed Division's Livestock and Meat Standardization (LMS) Branch before use by Meat Grading and Certification (MGC) Branch personnel. MGC Branch personnel may accept oral or written waivers to contractual documents on options such as quality grade, yield grade, weight range, markings, packing/packaging material, etc., from the purchaser at the local level. Oral waivers must be followed up in writing in a timely fashion. Changes, other than purchaser options, are not acceptable from the purchaser without prior approval from the LMS Branch.

All products offered for meat grading or certification services must originate from animals which were slaughtered in or from products manufactured or processed in establishments regularly operated under supervision of the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) or under any system of meat inspection approved by the USDA. Unless otherwise specified, all meat and meat products originated, manufactured, or processed in establishments outside the United States and operated under approved USDA meat inspection regulations are acceptable for certification.

It is the responsibility of the contractor to assure processes and products presented for certification meet all specification requirements before offering to MGC Branch personnel for certification.

General Procedures

1. Refer determinations for wholesomeness or presence of foreign materials (glass, dirt, insect parts, etc.) to the appropriate inspection activity as shown below:
 - a. In FSIS-inspected facilities, refer determinations to FSIS inspector.
 - b. In State-inspected facilities operating under a USDA-approved system, refer determinations to the Federal-State coordinator.
 - c. When outside FSIS jurisdiction, contact an FSIS compliance officer.
2. When examining USDA purchases of canned meat products at sites not operating under FSIS regulations, MGC Branch personnel will be responsible for ensuring that flippers,

swellers, and leakers are not repacked. MGC Branch personnel will also be responsible for verifying the destruction of extra shipping containers bearing inspection legends or certification stamps, and for obliterating the official markings.

3. Certified products that FSIS holds for incubation may be shipped as follows:
 - a. Cans of acceptable product may be commingled in a case.
 - b. Cans from lots having similar penalties may be commingled in cases.
 - c. Shipping partial cases is not permitted.
 - d. Note can codes, lot numbers, and number of cases in each category to be shipped, along with analytical results for each lot on acceptance certificates. Mark cases containing various lots "mixed" in the location designated for the lot number. Otherwise, mark that space with the applicable lot number.
4. When in-line sampling, the grader will verify prior to certifying products that the production equipment is capable of producing product meeting specification requirements. The grader will examine all production equipment to verify proper type, operation, and calibration such as grinding plate sizes, scale certification, metal detection sensitivity, and any other equipment whose proper operation and adjustment may affect product quality.
5. All scales used for certified production are required to have been calibrated by a scale certification or testing agency within the past 30 days. The scale certification must include the date certified, name of agency or company, and specific identity of the scale. This may be accomplished by a certification label affixed to the scale or by reference to the scale serial number if the scale certificate is kept at a separate location in the facility. Plant personnel licensed by the scale certification company may perform scale certification.

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