



Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Poultry Picture Series

A Guide to U.S. Graded Chicken 1st Edition, 2022

United States Department of Agriculture / Agricultural Marketing Service
Livestock and Poultry Program / Standards and Specifications Division



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Introduction

The Poultry Grading Picture Series illustrates various defects described in the official U.S. Classes, Standards and Grades for Poultry. The illustrations selected are to assist USDA poultry commodity graders, industry, academia, and food buyers. All photos and defect criteria referenced in this picture series apply to chickens within the 2-6 pound size range. Refer to the official U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for Poultry for tolerances of other carcass weights.

The USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has developed official grade standards for poultry carcasses, which measure such factors as meat yield, fat covering, freedom from defects such as cuts and tears in the skin, feathers, broken/disjointed bones, discolorations and ready-to-cook (RTC) factors. The standards are applied to determine the quality of the product, and are not a reflection of wholesomeness, which is determined by the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) prior to the grading process.

Poultry grading service is provided in accordance with the official U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for Poultry which are available at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/grades-standards/poultry-and-poultry-products-grades-and-standards>

AMS also maintains the Poultry Grading Manual which is a guide to the uniform application of the U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for poultry which can be found here: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/publications/content/poultry-grading-manual>

Our USDA graders also utilize AMS' Quality Assessment Division (QAD) policies and procedures for grading known as the 500 series. The 500 series further defines certain information from the U.S. Classes, Standards and Grades for Poultry and can be found here: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/resources/qad-procedures-grading>

Poultry producers, packers, wholesalers, food manufacturers, food service operators, food retailers, and consumers rely on USDA's poultry grading services to ensure that their requirements are met for class, quality, condition, and other factors. The grading program offers several advantages, for example, independent third-party opinion on product quality based on the U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for Poultry, which assures the buyer the quality meets or exceeds those standards. Additionally, the grade shield assures the consumer or end user top quality poultry and poultry products.

A digital edition of the Poultry Picture Series and further information about poultry grading is available at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/grades-standards/poultry>

Printed copies of the Poultry Picture Series and other poultry grading resources may be requested by sending an email to: AMSPoultryResources@usda.gov

Acknowledgements

This publication would not have been possible without the dedicated assistance and support of numerous USDA poultry commodity graders, supervisors, and the various poultry companies providing product samples for these pictures and the onsite photography sessions.

We express a special thank you to the USDA Photography Services and the Agricultural Research Service in Athens, GA for their exceptional quality of images taken for this publication.

AMS truly benefits from the working relationship with all our industry and USDA partners. It is our hope that this publication will be a working resource for AMS, industry, academia, and food buyers alike to ensure quality poultry.

Poultry Grading

Grading is classifying and sorting poultry according to various groups of conditions and quality characteristics. Ready-to-cook poultry carcasses and parts, and certain poultry products, may be graded for quality according to official standards and grades.

The development of grade standards and the identification and certification of class, quality, quantity, and condition of agricultural products is authorized by the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (AMA) as amended (7 U.S.C. 1621 et seq). Regulations to implement the AMA were developed in cooperation with State agriculture officials, producers, processors, and consumers.

The kinds of poultry eligible for grading and certification include, but are not limited to, chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, pigeons, and guineas. The form may be as a ready-to-cook carcass, part or as a further processed product which include roasts, size reduced poultry and cooked products eligible to receive the Prepared From Grade A shield.

All poultry that is graded must first be inspected. Inspection refers to the wholesomeness of poultry and its fitness for food, but is not concerned with quality or grade. The inspection mark means that the poultry has passed examination by a qualified USDA veterinarian or inspector during slaughter and/or processing. All slaughter plants are supervised by a USDA veterinarian.

Quality

Quality is defined as the inherent properties of any product that determines its relative degree of excellence or value. The conditions and characteristics that a customer or consumer wants and is willing to pay for, can be considered in a broad sense, “Quality Factors.”

Livestock & Poultry (L&P) Program administer a nationwide poultry grading program to determine compliance for quality according to the official U.S. Standards. Grading services are rendered by USDA on a voluntary fee-for-service basis. L&P Program representatives (USDA Graders) supervise

the grading, packaging, and packing of the poultry product to ensure that it meets applicable quality standards. In order for the poultry to be eligible to bear the official identification, the poultry must be graded by a plant employed authorized grader, and then checkgraded and certified by the USDA Grader. Officially graded poultry which passes this examination and evaluation process is eligible for official grade identification.

Advantages of Poultry Grading

- Independent third-party opinion on product quality based on U.S. Standards
- Assures the buyer of product quality
- Basis for fair bidding between suppliers
- Offers the certification to aid poultry marketing in domestic and foreign markets
- Certifies that product meets the requirements of USDA Approved Commercial Specifications or USDA Federal Purchase Program Specifications

Standards for Poultry

USDA Grade A whole carcasses and parts:

- Are fully fleshed and meaty
- Have normal conformation and shape
- Are free of disjointed or broken bones*
- Are free of feathers*
- Are free of exposed flesh and discolorations*

USDA Grade A boneless-skinless poultry products:

- Are free of bone, skin, cartilage, tendons, bruises, blood clots, and other discolorations*
- Are free of cuts, tears, and holes in the muscle tissue, and excess trimming around the outer edges of the product*

*Within tolerances stated in the U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for Poultry (see page 9)

Chicken Skeletal Diagram

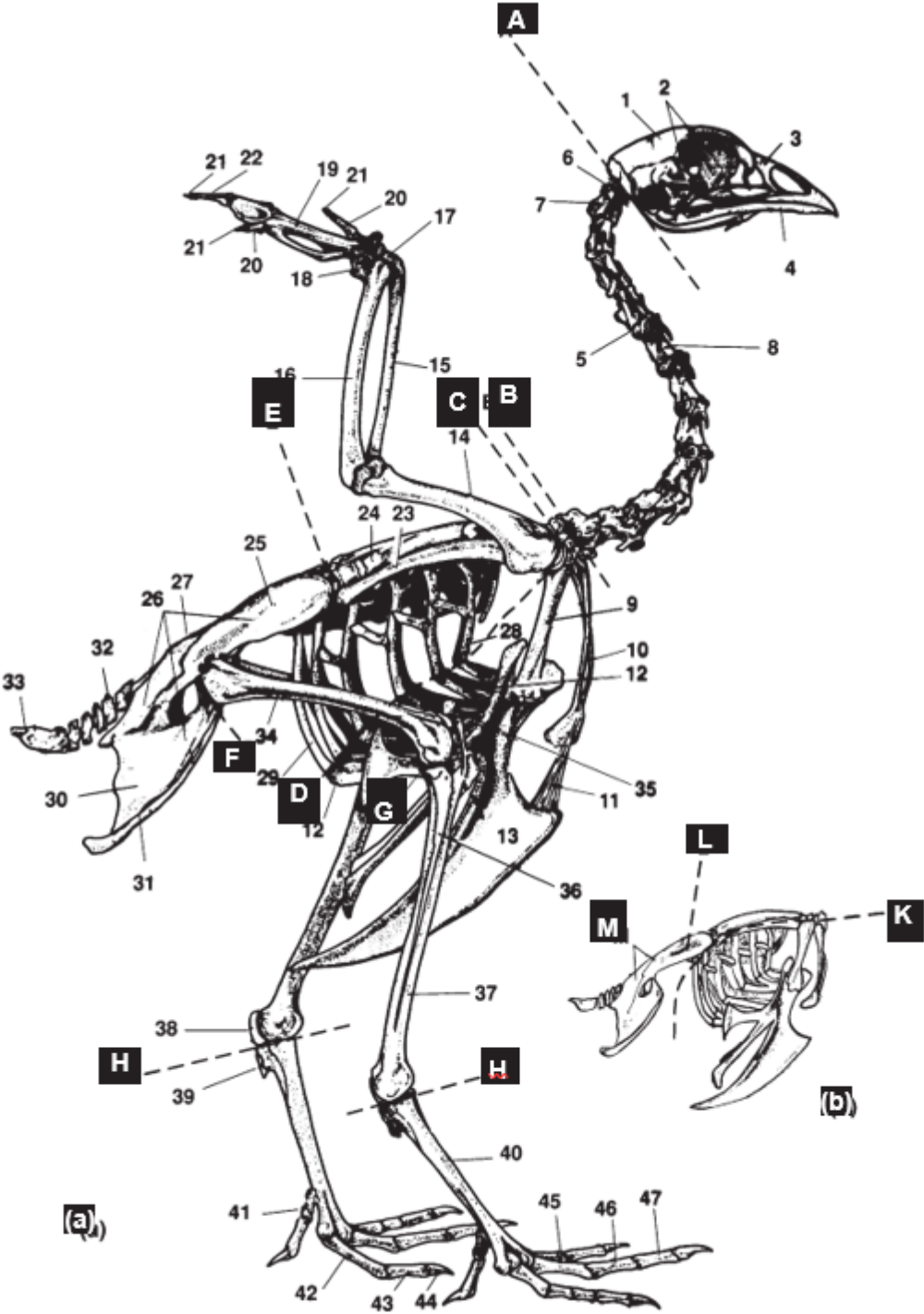


Figure 30. Skeleton of a chicken. (Negative No. 89BW0137)

Figure A, whole chicken skeleton

Head

- 1) Vertebral cranium (lateral parietal crest)
- 2) Orbital fossa
- 3) Visceral cranium (lateral ramus of nasal bone)
- 4) Mandibula (mandible, lower jaw)

Neck

- 5) Region of the ligamentum nuchae (main ligament of the neck)
- 6) Atlas - First cervical
- 7) Axis - Second cervical
- 8) Cervical vertebrae

Breast

- 9) Coracoid
- 10) Clavicle - Wishbone
- 11) Hypocledial ligament
- 12) Sternal rib portion
- 13) Sternum - Keelbone

Wing

- 14) Humerus
- 15) Radius
- 16) Ulna
- 17) Radial carpal
- 18) Ulnar carpal
- 19) Third carpometacarpal
- 20) First phalanges
- 21) Distal phalanges
- 22) Second phalanx, third digit

Back

- 23) Scapula
- 24) Thoracic vertebrae
- 25) Ilium
- 26) Os innominatum
- 27) Synsacrum
- 28) Second rib
- 29) Vertebral rib portion
- 30) Ischium
- 31) Pubium - Pinbone

Tail

- 32) Coccygeal vertebrae
- 33) Urostyle - Pygostyle

Leg

- 34) Femur
- 35) Patella - Knee cap
- 36) Fibula
- 37) Tibia
- 38) Hypotarsal sesamoid

Foot

- 39) Hypotarsal ridge
- 40) Tarsometatarsus (second, third, and fourth)
- 41) First metatarsal
- 42) First phalanx, second digit
- 43) Second phalanx, second digit
- 44) Distal phalanx, second digit
- 45) First phalanx, third digit
- 46) Second phalanx, third digit
- 47) Third phalanx, third digit

Points where parts are cut in accordance with USDA regulations are identified with the letters listed below.

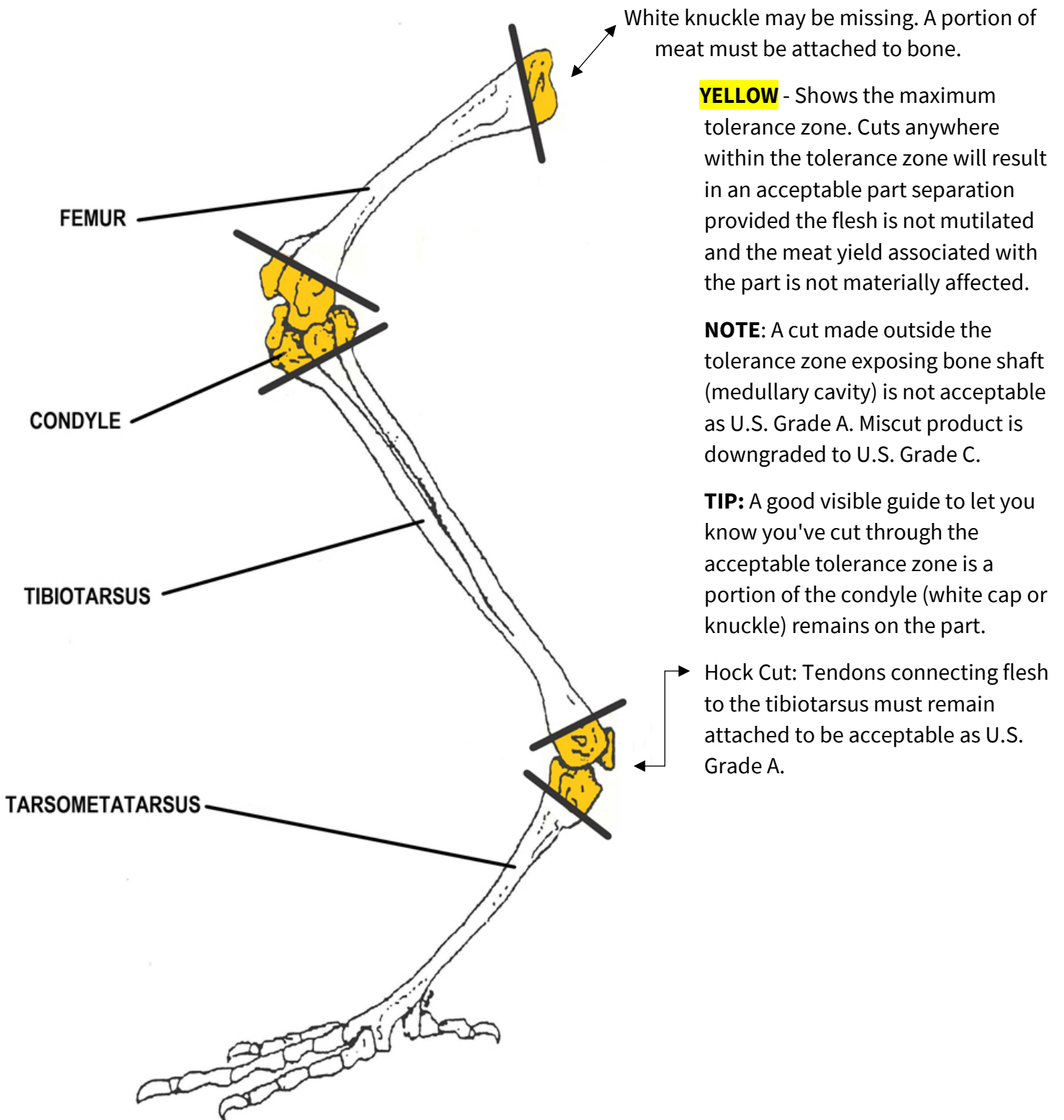
- A. Head from neck
- B. Neck from breast/back
- C. Wing from breast
- D. Breast from back
- E. Front half of back from back half of back
- F. Leg from back
- G. Thigh from drumstick
- H. Drumstick from foot

Figure (b). Breast and back of chicken skeleton.

Rib and pelvic meat areas, and point to cut breast with ribs, are identified with the letters listed below.

- K. Breast with rib cut
- L. Oyster meat area
- M. Pelvic meat area

Skeletal Manner of Cut – Leg



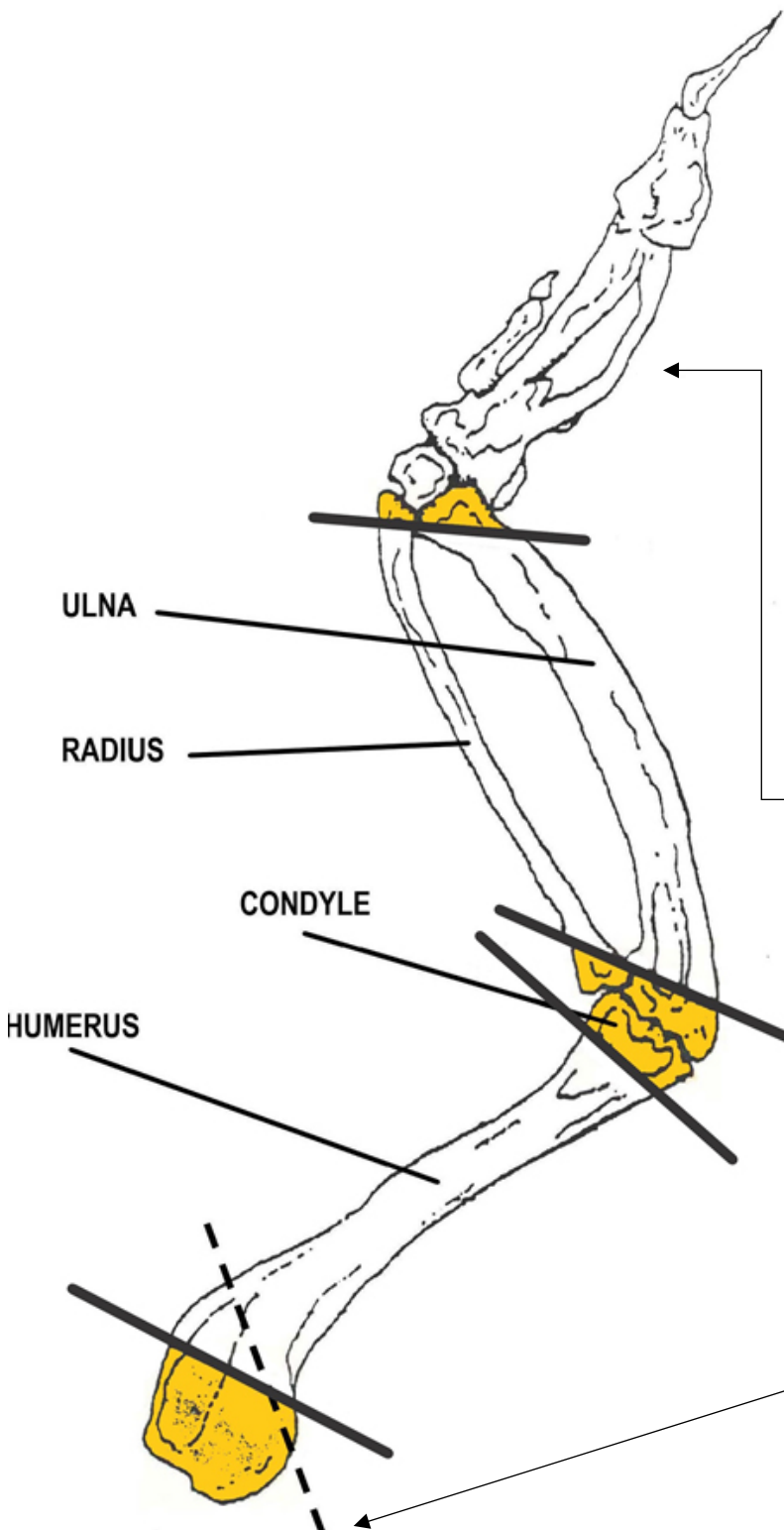
YELLOW - Shows the maximum tolerance zone. Cuts anywhere within the tolerance zone will result in an acceptable part separation provided the flesh is not mutilated and the meat yield associated with the part is not materially affected.

NOTE: A cut made outside the tolerance zone exposing bone shaft (medullary cavity) is not acceptable as U.S. Grade A. Miscut product is downgraded to U.S. Grade C.

TIP: A good visible guide to let you know you've cut through the acceptable tolerance zone is a portion of the condyle (white cap or knuckle) remains on the part.

Hock Cut: Tendons connecting flesh to the tibiotarsus must remain attached to be acceptable as U.S. Grade A.

Skeletal Manner of Cut – Wing



YELLOW: Shows the maximum tolerance zone. Cuts anywhere within the tolerance zone will result in an acceptable part separation provided the flesh is not mutilated and the meat yield associated with the part is not materially affected.

NOTE: A cut made outside the tolerance zone exposing bone shaft (medullary cavity) is not acceptable as U.S. Grade A. Miscut product is downgraded to U.S. Grade C.

TIP: A good visible guide to let you know you've cut through the acceptable tolerance zone is a portion of the condyle (white cap or knuckle) remains on the part.

Wing tip (3rd portion) may be removed at joint between 2nd and 3rd portion or anywhere in 3rd portion as long as the cut is even and leaves no protruding bones.

Cuts through the white knuckle that expose the bone shaft are not acceptable for U.S. Grade A.

Discoloration Reference



Slight discolorations are areas of discoloration that are generally pinkish in color and do not detract from the appearance of the carcass or part.



Light discolorations are generally reddish in color and are usually confined to areas of the skin or the surface of the flesh.



Moderate discolorations are areas that are generally dark red or bluish, or are areas of flesh bruising.

Areas of discoloration are limited to an aggregate area equivalent to the area of a circle of the diameter specified on the U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for Poultry Summary Sheets for each grade A, B, and C.

Ready-to-Cook Poultry - A Quality

Summary of Specifications for Standards of Quality for Individual Carcasses and Parts, Effective April 29, 1998 (Not All Inclusive -- Minimum Requirements and Maximum Defects Permitted)

Conformation

Conformation	Normal
Breastbone	Slight curve or dent
Back	Slight curve
Legs and Wings	Normal

Fleshing: Well fleshed, considering kind and class

Fat Covering: Well developed layer - especially between heavy feathers tracts

Defeathering (free of protruding feathers and hairs)

	Carcass	Parts
Turkeys (feathers less than 3/4 in.)	4	2
Ducks and Geese (feathers less than 1/2 in.)	8	4
All Other Poultry (feathers less than 1/2 in.)	4	2

Exposed Flesh

Minimum Weight Range	Maximum Weight Range	Carcass Breast & Legs	Carcass Elsewhere	Large Carcass Parts: Breast & Legs	Large Carcass Parts: Elsewhere	Other Parts
None	2 lbs.	1/4 in.	1 in.	1/4 in.	1/2 in.	1/4 in.
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.	1/4 in.	1 1/2 in.	1/4 in.	3/4 in.	1/4 in.
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.	1/2 in.	2 in.	1/2 in.	1 in.	1/2 in.
Over 16	None	1/2 in.	3 in.	1/2 in.	1 1/2 in.	1/2 in.

Discolorations: Carcass

Carcass Minimum Weight	Carcass Maximum Weight	Lightly Shaded Breast & Legs	Lightly Shaded Elsewhere	Moderately Shaded Hock of Leg	Moderately Shaded Elsewhere
None	2 lbs.	3/4 in.	1 1/4 in.	1/4 in.	5/8 in.
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.	1 in.	2 in.	1/2 in.	1 in.
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.	1 1/2 in.	2 1/2 in.	3/4 in.	1 1/4 in.
Over 16	None	2 in.	3 in.	1 in.	1 1/2 in.

Discolorations: Large Carcass Parts (halves, front and rear halves)

Minimum Weight	Maximum Weight	Lightly Shaded Breast & Legs	Lightly Shaded Elsewhere	Moderately Shaded Hock of Leg	Moderately Shaded Elsewhere
None	2 lbs.	1/2 in.	1 in.	1/4 in.	1/2 in.

Minimum Weight	Maximum Weight	Lightly Shaded Breast & Legs	Lightly Shaded Elsewhere	Moderately Shaded Hock of Leg	Moderately Shaded Elsewhere
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.	3/4 in.	1 1/2 in.	3/8 in.	3/4 in.
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.	1 in.	2 in.	1/2 in.	1 in.
Over 16	None	1 1/4 in.	2 1/2 in.	5/8 in.	1 1/4 in.

Discolorations: Other Parts

Minimum Weight	Maximum Weight	Lightly Shaded	Moderately Shaded
None	2 lbs.	1/2 in.	1/4 in.
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.	3/4 in.	3/8 in.
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.	1 in.	1/2 in.
Over 16 lbs.	None	1 1/4 in.	5/8 in.

Other Defects

Disjointed and Broken Bones	Carcass--1 disjointed and no broken bones. Parts--Thighs with back portion, legs, or leg quarters may have femur disjointed from the hip joint. Other parts--none.
Missing Parts	Wing tips and tail. In ducks and geese, the parts of the wing beyond the second joint may be removed if removed at the joint and both wings are so treated. Tail may be removed at the base.
Freezing Defects	Slight darkening on back and drumstick. Overall bright appearance. Occasional pock-marks due to drying. Occasional small areas of clear, pinkish, or reddish-colored ice.

Notes

Ducks & Geese Defeathering: Hair or down is permitted on the carcass or part, provided the hair or down is less than 3/16 inch in length, and is scattered so that the carcass or part has a clean appearance, especially on the breast and legs.

Exposed Flesh: Maximum aggregate area of all exposed flesh. In addition, the carcass or part may have cuts or tears that do not expand or significantly expose flesh, provided the aggregate length of all such cuts and tears does not exceed a length tolerance equal to the permitted dimensions listed above.

Large Carcass Parts & Other Parts: For all parts, trimming of skin along the edge is allowed, provided at least 75 % of the normal skin cover associated with the part remains attached, and the remaining skin uniformly covers the outer surface and does not detract from the appearance of the part.

Moderately shaded discolorations and discolorations due to flesh bruising are free of clots and limited to areas other than the breast and legs except for the area adjacent to the hock.

Ready-to-Cook Poultry - B Quality

Summary of Specifications for Standards of Quality for Individual Carcasses and Parts, Effective April 29, 1998 (Not All Inclusive --Minimum Requirements and Maximum Defects Permitted)

Conformation

Conformation	Moderate Deformities
Breastbone	Moderately dented, curved, or crooked
Back	Moderately crooked
Legs and Wings	Moderately misshapen

Fleshing: Moderately fleshed, considering kind and class

Fat Covering: Sufficient fat layer--especially on breast and legs

Defeathering (A few scattered protruding feathers and hairs)

	Carcass	Parts
Turkeys (feathers less than 3/4 in.)	6	3
Ducks and Geese (feathers less than 1/2 in.)	10	5
All Other Poultry (feathers less than 1/2 in.)	6	3

Exposed Flesh

Carcass	No part on the carcass (wings, legs, entire back, or entire breast) has more than 1/3 of the flesh exposed
Parts	No more than 1/3 of the flesh normally covered by skin exposed

Discolorations: Carcass, Lightly or Moderately Shaded

Carcass Minimum Weight	Carcass Maximum Weight	Lightly/Moderately Shaded Breast & Legs	Lightly/Moderately Shaded Elsewhere
None	2 lbs.	1 1/4 in.	2 1/4 in.
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.	2 in.	3 in.
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.	2 1/2 in.	4 in.
Over 16 lbs.	None	3 in.	5 in.

Discolorations: Large Carcass Parts (halves, front and rear halves)

Carcass Minimum Weight	Carcass Maximum Weight	Lightly/Moderately Shaded Breast & Legs	Lightly/Moderately Shaded Elsewhere
None	2 lbs.	1 in.	1 1/4 in.

Carcass Minimum Weight	Carcass Maximum Weight	Lightly/Moderately Shaded Breast & Legs	Lightly/Moderately Shaded Elsewhere
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.	1 1/2 in.	1 3/4 in.
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.	2 in.	2 1/2 in.
Over 16 lbs.	None	2 1/2 in.	3 in.

Discolorations: Other Parts

Minimum Weight	Maximum Weight	Lightly/Moderately Shaded Breasts, Legs & Parts
None	2 lbs.	3/4 in.
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.	1 in.
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.	1 1/2 in.
Over 16 lbs.	None	1 3/4 in.

Other Defects

Disjointed and Broken Bones	Carcass--2 disjointed and no broken bones, or 1 disjointed and 1 non-protruding broken bone. Parts--may be disjointed, no broken bones; wing beyond second joint may be removed at a joint.
Missing Parts	Wing tips, 2nd wing joint, and tail.
Trimming: Carcass	Slight trimming of the carcass is permitted provided the meat yield of any part on the carcass is not appreciably affected. The back may be trimmed in an area not wider than the base of the tail to the area halfway between the base of the tail and the hip joints.
Trimming: Parts	A moderate amount of meat may be trimmed around the edge of a part to remove defects.
Freezing Defects	May lack brightness. Few pockmarks due to drying. Moderate areas showing a layer of clear, pinkish, or reddish colored ice.

Notes

Ducks & Geese Defeathering: Hair or down is permitted on the carcass or part, provided the hair or down is less than 3/16 inch in length, and is scattered so that the carcass or part has a clean appearance, especially on the breast and legs.

Discolorations due to flesh bruising shall be free of clots and may not exceed one-half the total aggregate area of permitted discoloration.

Ready-to-Cook Poultry - C Quality

Summary of Specifications for Standards of Quality for Individual Carcasses and Parts, Effective April 29, 1998 (Not All Inclusive) (Minimum Requirements and Maximum Defects Permitted)

Conformation

Conformation	Abnormal
Breastbone	Seriously curved or cooked
Back	Seriously crooked
Legs and Wings	Misshapen

Fleshing: Poorly fleshed

Fat Covering: Lacking in fat covering over all parts of carcass.

Defeathering (Scattering of protruding feathers and hairs)

	Carcass	Parts
Turkeys (feathers less than 3/4 in.)	8	4
Ducks and Geese (feathers less than 1/2 in.)	12	6
All Other Poultry (feathers less than 1/2 in.)	8	4

Exposed Flesh

Carcass	No limit
Parts	No limit

Discolorations

Carcass Breast, Legs, & Elsewhere	No limit on size, number of areas, or intensity of discolorations and flesh bruises if such areas do not render any part of the carcass unfit for food.
Parts	No limit on size, number of areas, or intensity of discolorations and flesh bruises if such areas do not render any part unfit for food.

Other Defects

Disjointed and Broken Bones	No limit
Missing Parts	Wing tips, wings, and tails. Backs shall include all meat and skin from pelvic bones, except that the meat contained in the ilium (oyster) may be removed. The vertebral ribs and scapula with meat and skin and the backbone located anterior (forward) of ilia bones may also be removed (front half of back).
Trimming: Carcass & Parts	Trimming of the breast and legs is permitted, but not to the extent that the normal meat yield is materially affected. The back may be trimmed in an area not wider than the base of the tail and extending from the tail to the area between the hip joints.
Freezing Defects	Numerous pockmarks and large dried areas.

Notes

Ducks & Geese Defeathering: Hair or down is permitted on the carcass or part, provided the hair or down is less than 3/16 inch in length, and is scattered so that the carcass or part has a clean appearance, especially on the breast and legs.

Poultry Grading and Inspection: What's the Difference?



U.S. Graded Poultry

- Grading refers to the sorting of poultry by quality factors that determine its relative degree of excellence.
- Product is continuously monitored by USDA graders and assigned a grade based on the following quality factors: Exposed flesh, defeathering, discolorations, broken bones, missing parts, freezing defects, conformation or shape, fleshing, and fat covering.
- Grading is a voluntary service paid for by poultry processors. Not all poultry is USDA graded.



U.S. Inspected Poultry

- Inspection refers to the safety of poultry and poultry products and the accuracy of their labels.
- Both the products and the plants' systems for sanitation and preparation of products are inspected to assure that they are safe.
- Inspection involves only those properties related to wholesomeness and labeling, not quality.
- Inspection is mandatory and required by law, with minor exceptions

Quality is the Difference!

Whole Bird (Grade A)



**Grade A Whole Bird
(Front)**



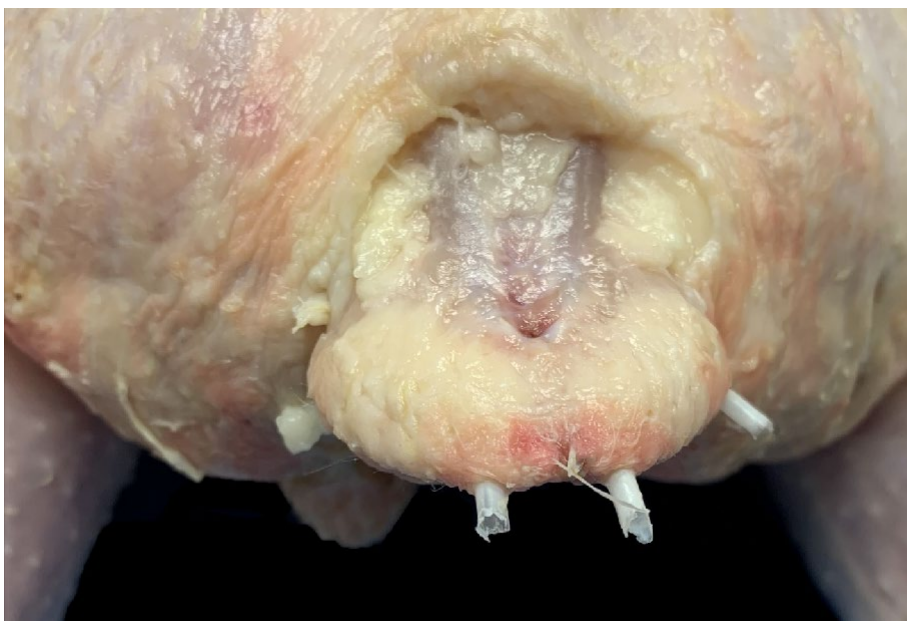
**Grade A Whole Bird
(Back)**

Whole Bird—Feathers



Grade A Whole Bird with Borderline Feathers Under the Tail

There is a tolerance for a small amount of encrustations and feathers in this area provided it does not detract from the overall appearance.



Grade A Whole Bird with Feather Shafts

Tolerance for feathers less than ½ inch:

Grade A: 4 feathers

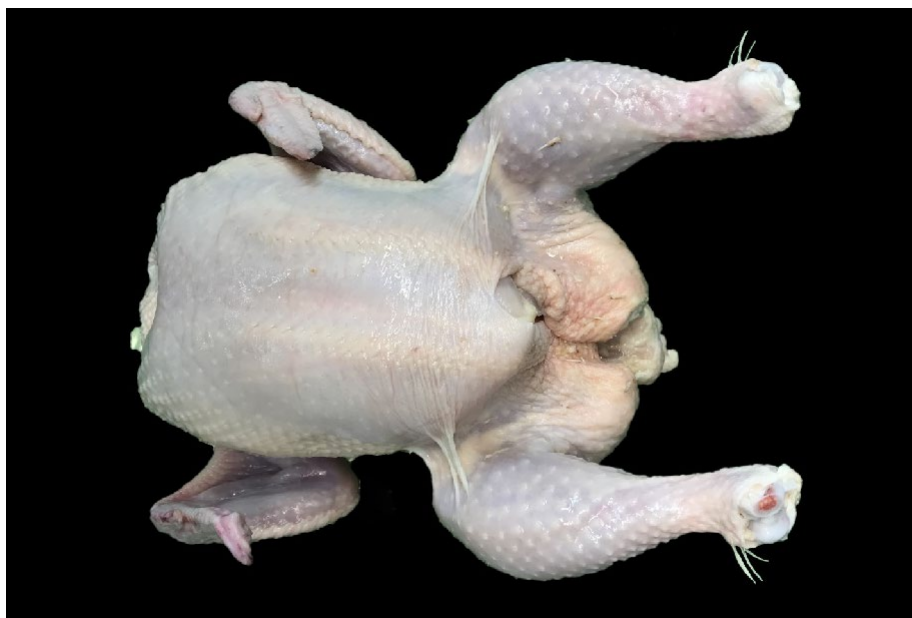
Grade B: 6 feathers

Grade C: 8 feathers

No Grade: more than 8 feathers

Note: Feather shafts are considered feathers

Whole Bird – Feathers



Grade B Whole Bird with 6 Feathers

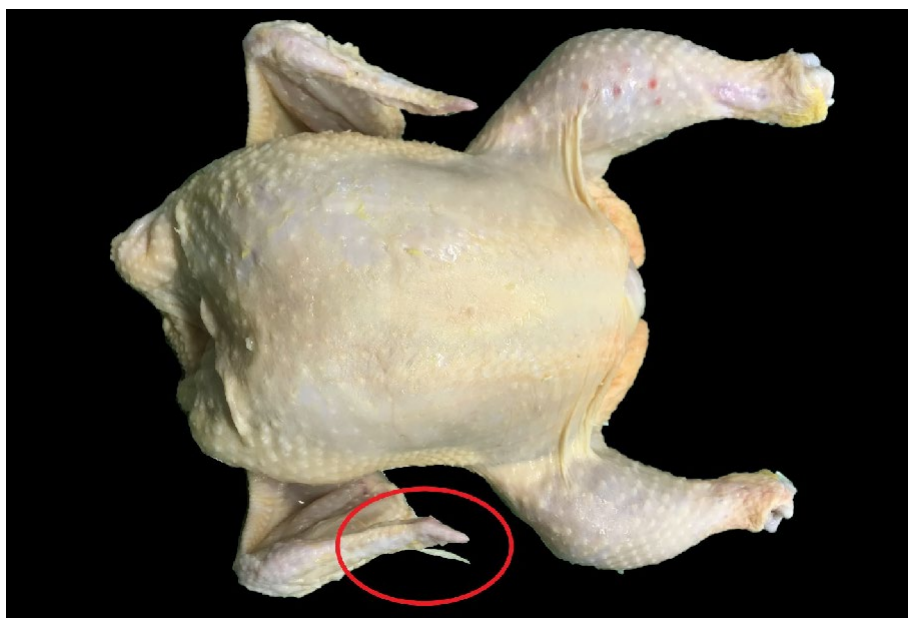
Tolerance for feathers less than ½ inch:

Grade A: 4 feathers

Grade B: 6 feathers

Grade C: 8 feathers

No Grade: more than 8 feathers



No Grade Whole Bird with Feather longer than ½ inch

Parts or carcasses with attached feather(s) exceeding ½ inch in length are considered No Grade.

Whole Bird – Exposed Flesh



Grade A Whole Bird with Borderline Exposed Flesh on Breast Tip

Tolerance for exposed flesh for breast on Grade A carcasses is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch, but natural exposed flesh on the breast tip is allowed up to the heavy feather tract.



Grade B Whole Bird with Exposed Flesh on Breast Tip

Grade B carcasses may have exposed flesh provided no part on the carcass (wings, legs, entire back, or entire breast) has more than $\frac{1}{3}$ the flesh normally covered by skin exposed.

Whole Bird – Exposed Flesh



Grade A Whole Bird with Exposed Flesh on Back

Tolerance for exposed flesh on Grade A carcasses is 1 ½ inches in length or diameter on parts other than the breast and legs.



Grade B Whole Bird with Exposed Flesh on Breast

Grade B carcasses may have exposed flesh provided no part on the carcass (wings, legs, entire back, or entire breast) has more than ⅓ the flesh normally covered by skin exposed.

Whole Bird – Discoloration



Grade A Whole Bird with Light Discoloration

Tolerance for areas of light discoloration for Grade A carcasses on the breast and legs is 1 inch in diameter.



Grade A Whole Bird with Light Discoloration on Back of Wing

Tolerance for areas of light discoloration for Grade A carcasses on areas other than the breast and leg is 2 inches in diameter.

Whole Bird – Discoloration



Grade A Whole Bird with Moderate Discoloration on Back of Wing

Tolerance for moderate discoloration for Grade A carcasses on areas other than the breast and legs is 1 inch in diameter.



Grade B Whole Bird with Moderate Discoloration on Breast

Moderate discoloration is not permitted on the breast and legs for Grade A carcasses. Tolerance for moderate discoloration of Grade B carcasses is 2 inches in diameter on the breast and legs.

Whole Bird – Discoloration



Grade C Whole Bird with Moderate Aggregate Discoloration

There is no limit on size, number of areas, or intensity of discoloration for Grade C if such areas do not render any part of the carcass unfit for food.



Grade A Whole Bird with Moderate Discoloration on Hock

Moderate discolorations are limited to areas other than the breast and leg except for the area adjacent to the hock. Tolerance is ½ inch on hocks for Grade A whole bird carcasses.

Whole Bird – Discoloration



Grade A Whole Bird with Borderline Encrustation on Breast

Small lightly colored encrustations that do not detract from the overall appearance of the carcass or part are permitted.



No Grade Whole Bird with Scab on Breast

Large or darkly colored scabs that detract from the overall appearance of the carcass or part are not permitted.

Whole Bird – Bone Defects



Grade A Whole Bird with One Disjointed Wing

There is a tolerance for one disjointed bone on Grade A carcasses, but there is no tolerance for broken bones on Grade A Carcasses.



Grade B Whole Bird with One Non-Protruding Broken Bone

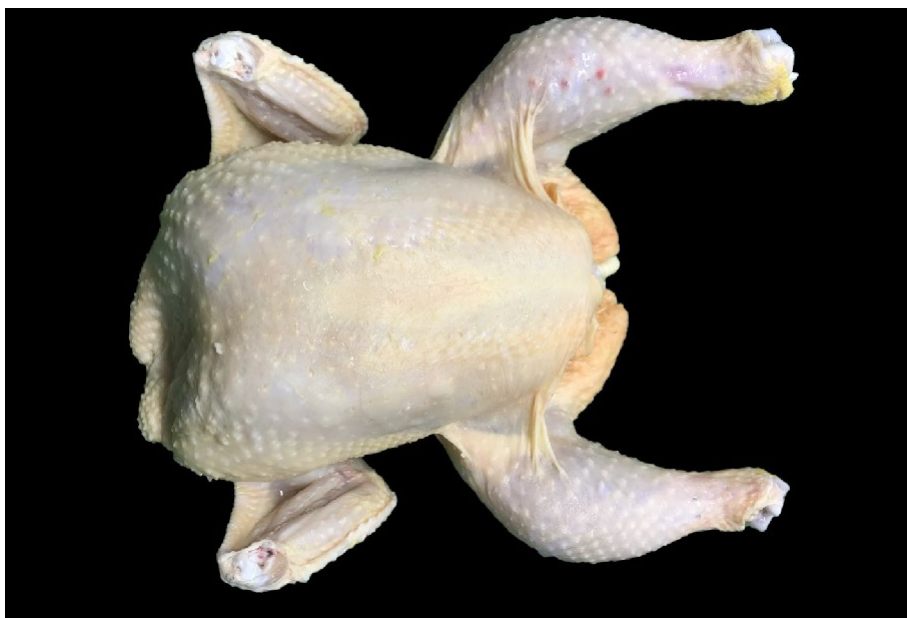
There is a tolerance for one broken non-protruding bone for Grade B carcasses.

Whole Bird – Missing Parts



Grade A Whole Bird with Long Neck

The neck is associated as part of the whole bird carcass and does not need to be removed. Neck length is unlimited provided no part of the head is attached.



Grade A Whole Bird Wing Tips Removed

One or both wing tips may be removed at the joint or anywhere in the third portion as long as the cut is even and leaves no protruding bones.

Whole Bird – Missing Parts



Grade A Whole Bird Tail Removed

The tail may be removed at the base.



Grade B Whole Bird with Back Trimmed

The back may be trimmed in an area not wider than the base of the tail to the area halfway between the base of the tail and hip joints.

Whole Bird – Missing Parts



Grade A Whole Bird Oil Gland Removed with Oil Duct Remaining

The oil duct may remain intact so long as the oil gland is removed.



No Grade Whole Bird With Oil Gland Close Up

Both lobes of the oil gland must be removed. Remnants of oil gland are permitted provided secretory material is not present.

Whole Bird – Missing Parts



Grade A Whole Bird Without Oil Gland Close Up

A small amount of yellow remnants of the oil gland are acceptable.

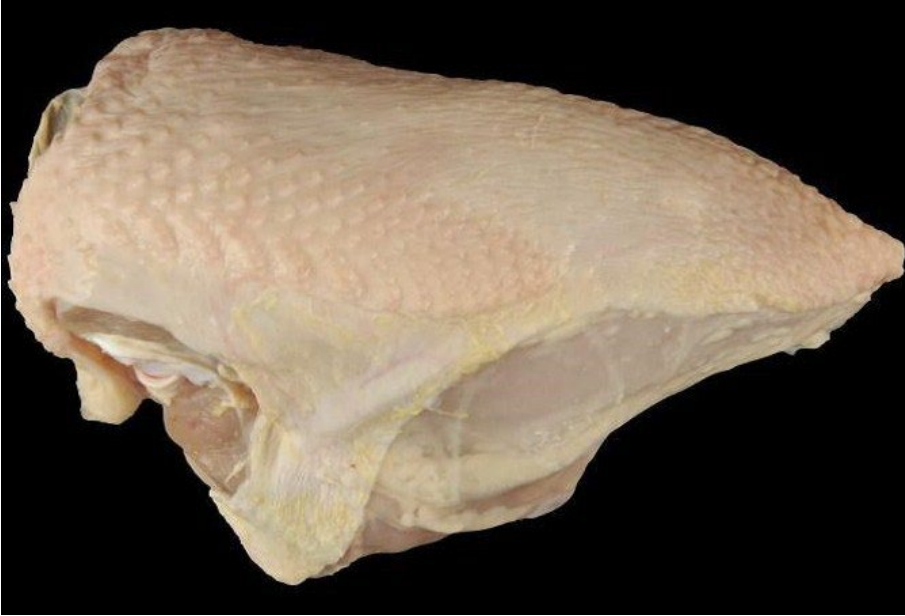


No Grade Whole Bird with Missing Part

There is no tolerance for missing parts on Grade A carcasses except for wing tips and tail.

Parts – Breast

Grade A Split Breast



Grade A Split Breast Wing Cut Tolerance

Wing cuts may extend to the heavy feather tract.



Parts- Breast



Grade A Split Breast with Grade A Wing

Cut shown is right at the edge of the heavy feather tract on the breast.



Grade C Split Breast with Grade A Wing

Cut shown extends beyond heavy feather tract resulting in a Grade C breast due to yield loss. Wings with excess breast meat attached are acceptable (sometimes called “Silver Dollar” wings).

Parts- Breast



Grade A Split Breast with Exposed Flesh

Tolerance for Grade A parts is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch exposed flesh.



Grade B Split Breast with Exposed Flesh

Tolerance for Grade B parts is up to $\frac{1}{3}$ area of flesh normally covered by the skin.

Parts- Breast



Grade B Split Breast with Borderline Aggregate Light Discoloration

Tolerance for Grade B is 1 inch aggregate area. This area of aggregate light discoloration would amount to more than 1 inch when condensed and detracts from the overall appearance.



Grade B Split Breast with Moderate Discoloration

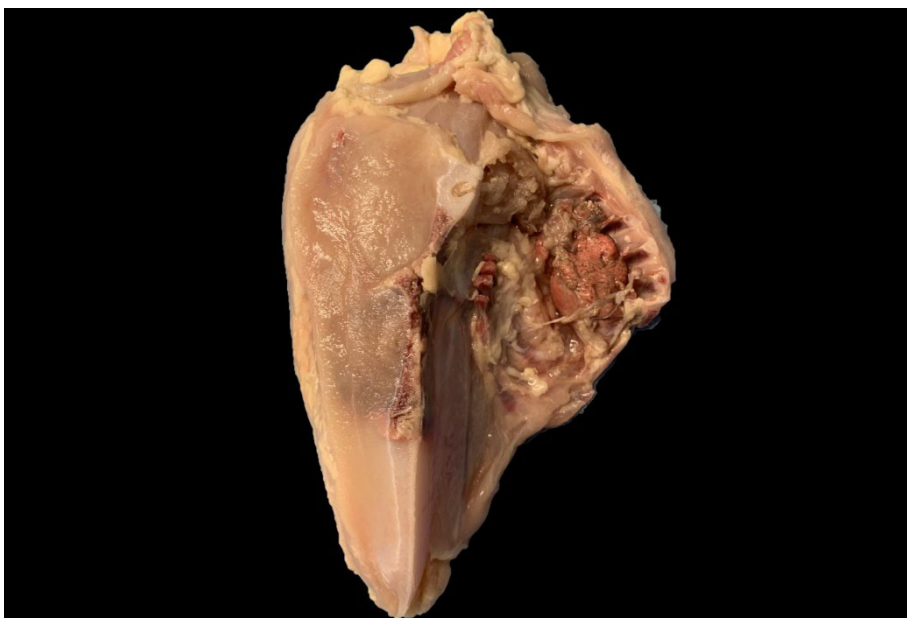
Tolerance for Grade B is 1 inch. For Grade A, there is no tolerance for moderate discoloration on breast parts.

Parts- Breast



Grade A Split Breast (inside) with Small Lung

The tolerance for lungs for all Grades is less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of a lung.



No Grade Split Breast (inside) with Large Lung

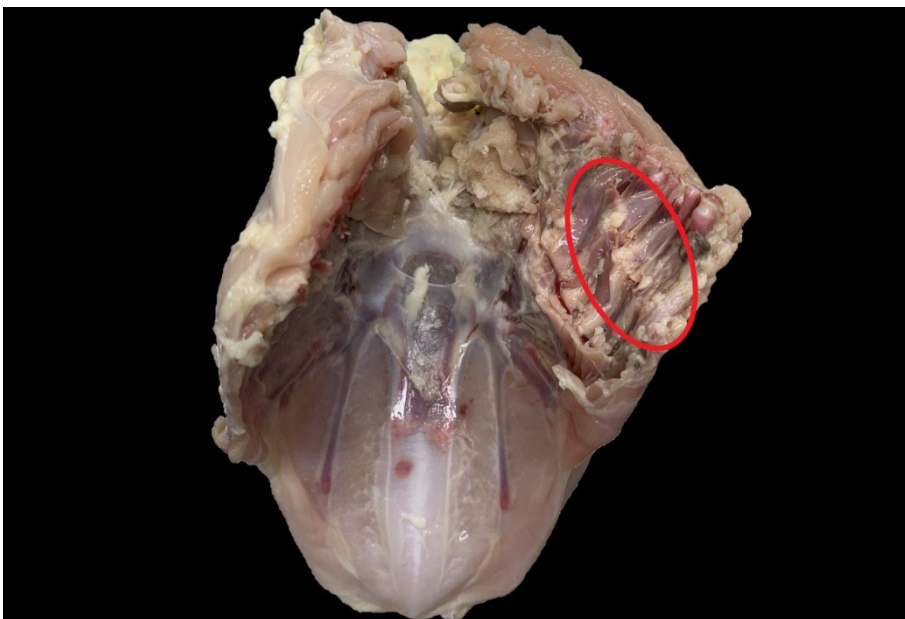
When more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of a lung is present, the part is considered a No Grade.

Parts- Breast



Grade A Whole Breast with Ribs Scored for Styling Purposes (inside)

Ribs are allowed to be scored and folded for styling purposes. They may be flexible, but still intact. The score should be made evenly with no sharp broken bones.



Grade C Whole Breast with Splintered Ribs (Inside)

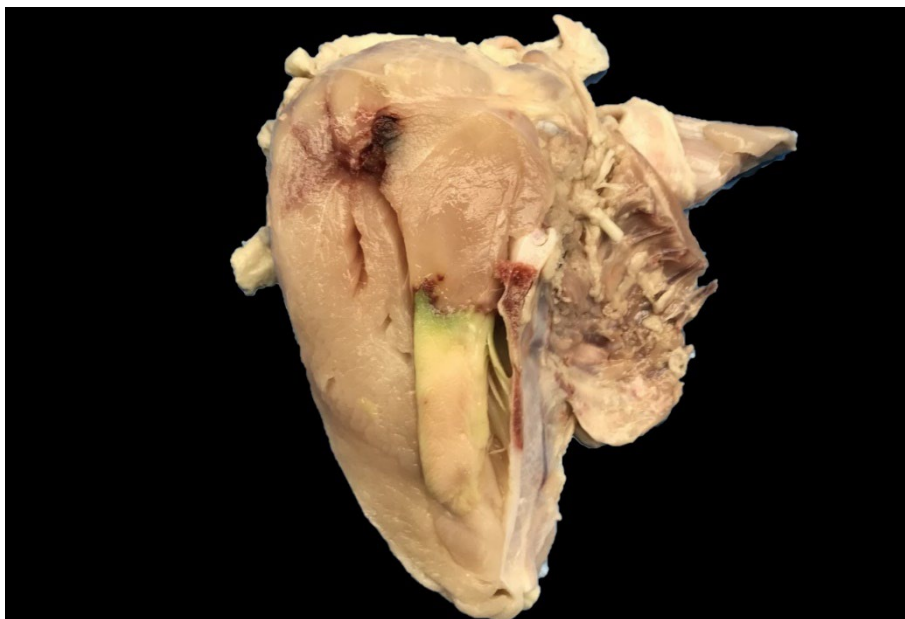
Breast with ribs that are splintered, jagged, and/or sharp are considered Grade C for broken bones.

Parts- Breast



Grade A Split Breast (inside) with Ribs Folded

Ribs may be scored and folded for styling purposes.



No Grade Split Breast with Green Muscle Disease

There is no tolerance for serious flesh defects. Product is considered No Grade and should be shown to plant representative.

Parts - Thigh

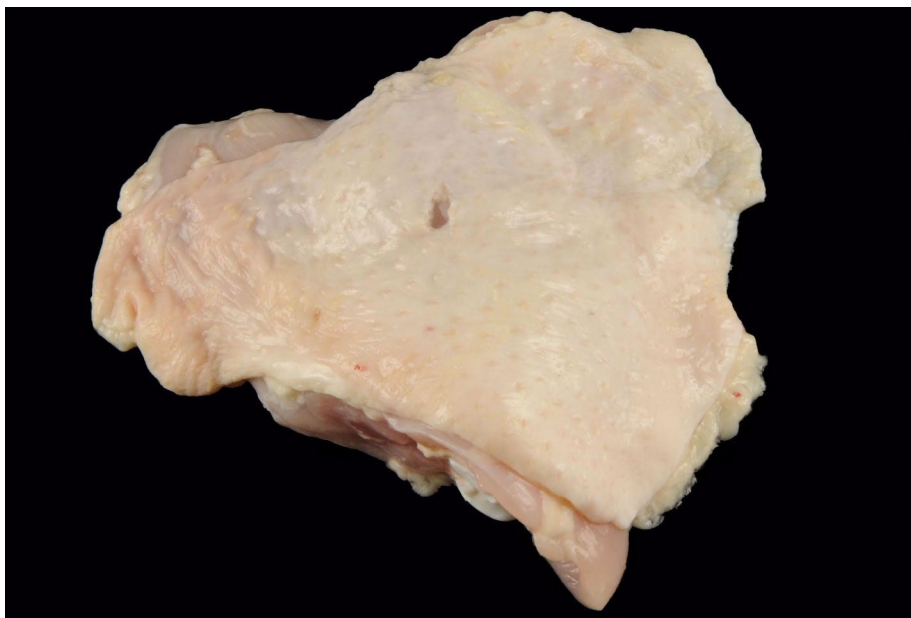


**Grade A Thigh
(outside)**



**Grade A Thigh
(inside)**

Parts - Thigh



Grade A Thigh with Exposed Flesh

Tolerance for Grade A parts is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. For all parts, trimming of skin along the edge is allowed, provided 75% skin associated with the part remains attached, and the remaining skin uniformly covers the outer surface.



Grade B Thigh with Exposed Flesh (exceeds $\frac{1}{4}$ inch)

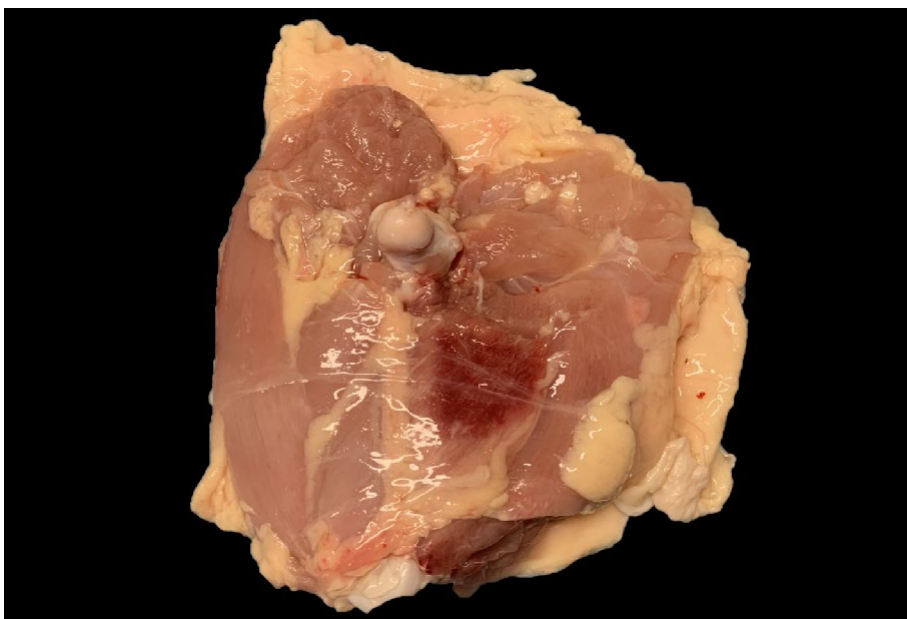
Tolerance for Grade B parts is up to $\frac{1}{3}$ area of flesh normally covered by the skin.

Parts - Thigh



Grade A Thigh with Slight Discoloration

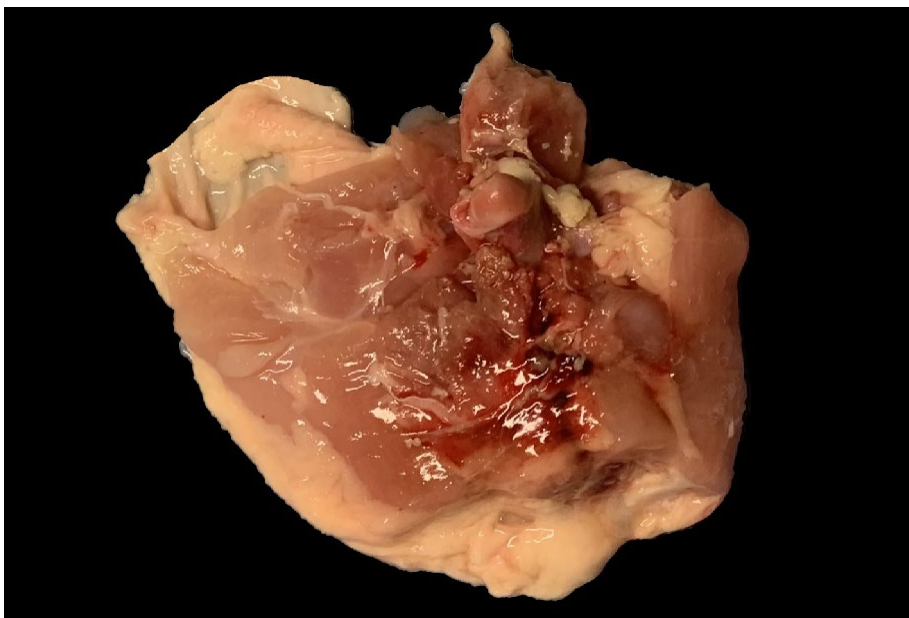
Slight discolorations are acceptable, provided they do not detract from the overall appearance of the product.



Grade A Thigh With Maximum Natural Adductor Muscle Discoloration

Natural discoloration of the adductor muscle on the thigh is acceptable up to this level.

Parts – Thigh



Grade C Thigh with Moderate Discoloration and Blood Clot

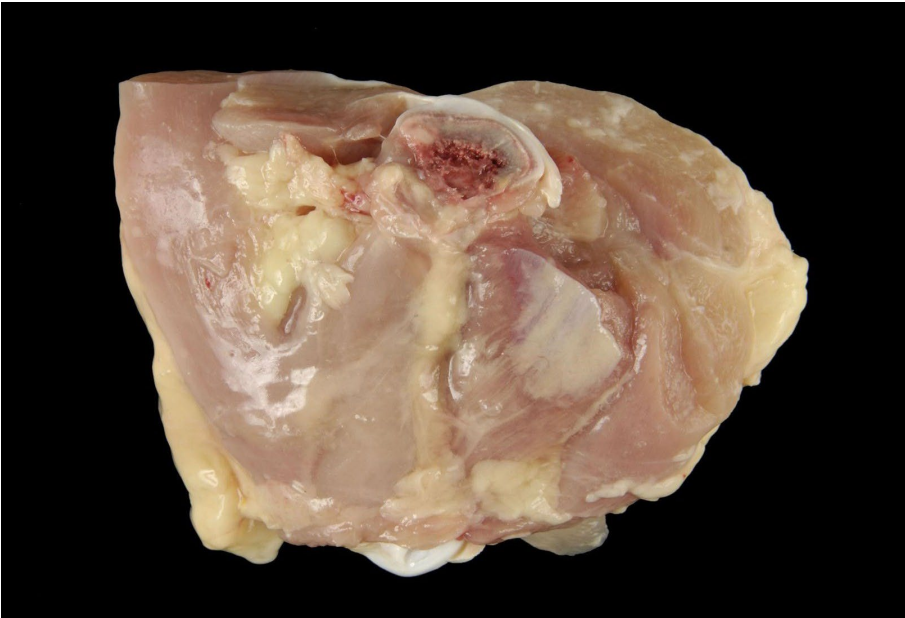
There is no tolerance for presence of blood clots for Grades A and B.



Grade A Thigh with Femur Cap Removed

Cap of femur bone may be partially attached or removed entirely for Grade A.

Parts – Thigh



Grade C Thigh Joint Miscut

Cuts must occur within the tolerance zone referenced on page 7. Note the absence of condyle surrounding the bottom/left portion of the femur cap. Medullary cavity is clearly exposed.



Grade C Thigh Joint Miscut (Meat Not Attached to Back of Femur Cap)

Flesh must be attached to the bone. If flesh falls away from femur cap when held upright, it is considered a miscut.

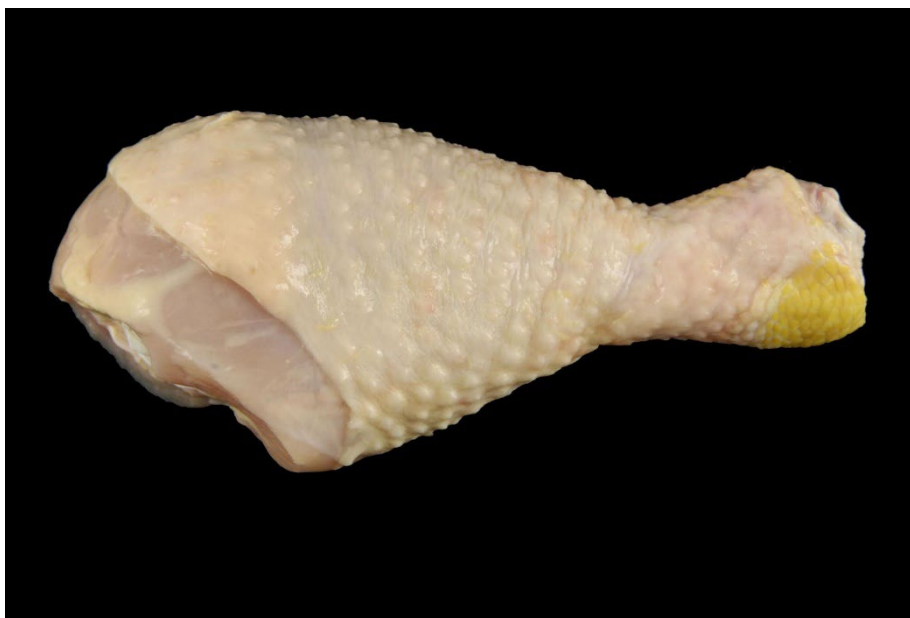
Parts – Thigh



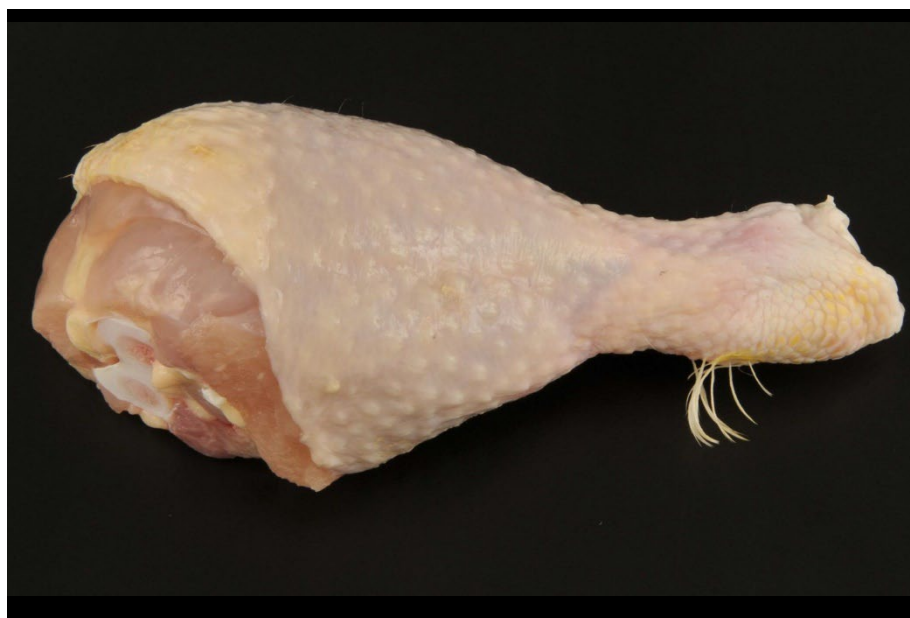
Grade A Thigh with Back Portion

Back portion (with or without tail) may be attached when labeled as such.

Parts – Drumstick



Grade A Drumstick



**No Grade Drumstick
Excessive Feathers**

Tolerance for feathers less than ½ inch:

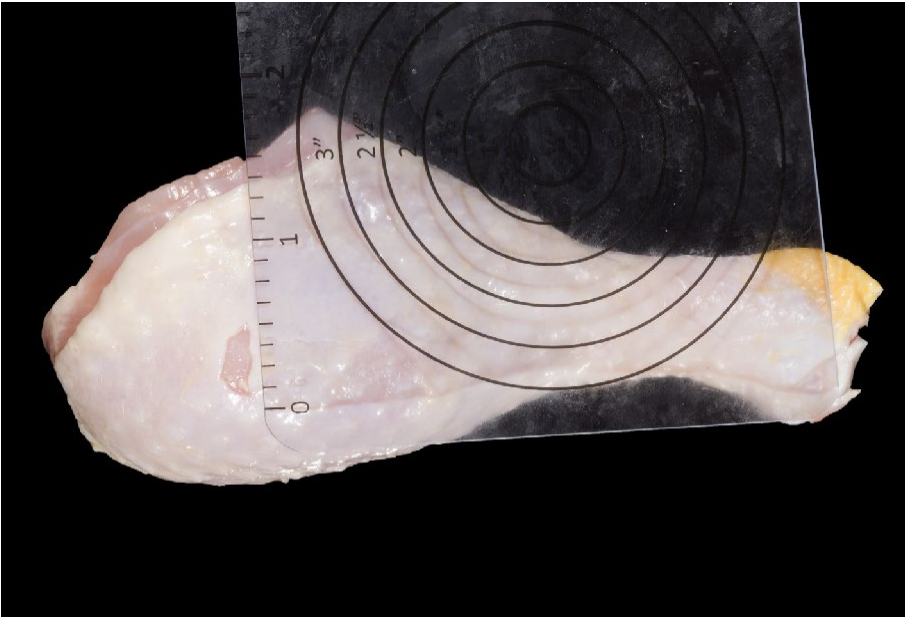
Grade A: 2 feathers

Grade B: 3 feathers

Grade C: 4 feathers

No Grade: more than 4 feathers

Parts – Drumstick



Grade B Drumstick Exposed Flesh (exceeds 1/4 inch)

Tolerance for Grade B parts is up to 1/3 area of flesh normally covered by the skin.



Grade A Borderline Drumstick Light Discoloration on Hock

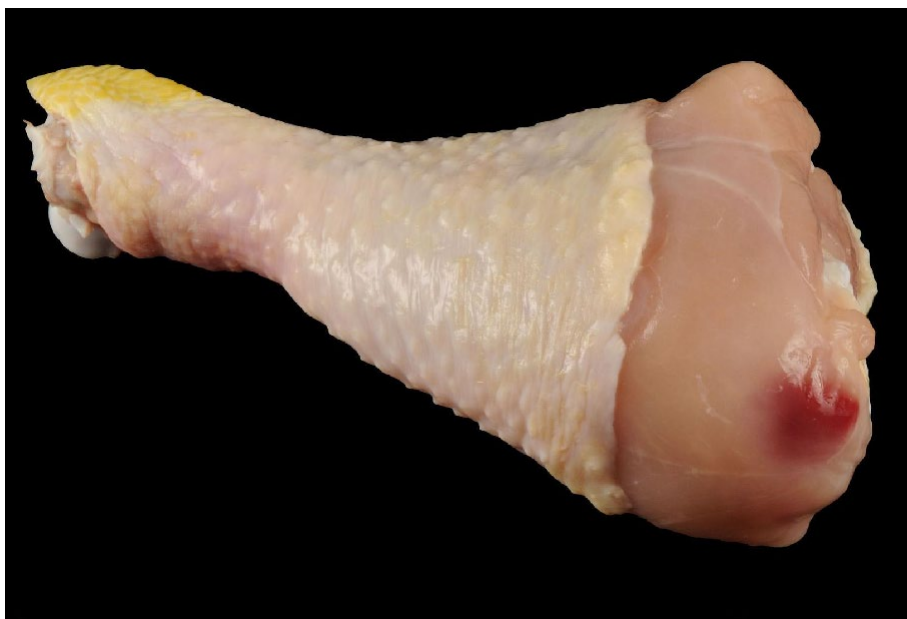
Tolerance for light discoloration on parts is 3/4 inches of aggregate area. This photo shows the maximum allowable area of aggregate light discoloration.

Parts – Drumstick



Grade A Drumstick Moderate Discoloration on Hock

Moderately shaded discolorations are limited to are- as other than the leg except for the area adjacent to the hock. Tolerance is $\frac{3}{8}$ inch area for parts.



Grade B Drumstick Moderate Discoloration

Tolerance for moderate discolorations for Grade B is 1 inch.

Parts – Drumstick



Grade A Drumstick Borderline Hock Cut

Cut occurred in tolerance zone referenced on page 7 as evident by presence of condyle.



Grade C Drumstick Hock Miscut

Cuts must occur within the tolerance zone referenced on page 7. Note that the tendon has been severed and is visible below the bone.

Parts – Drumstick



Grade A Drumstick Borderline Joint Cut

Cut occurred in tolerance zone referenced on page 7 as evident by presence of condyle.



Grade C Drumstick Joint Miscut

Cuts must occur within the tolerance zone referenced on page 7. Note the absence of condyle surrounding the left portion of the bone. Medullary cavity is clearly exposed.

Parts – Drumstick



No Grade Drumstick with Excessive Skin

Skin or fat not normally associated with the part may not be included unless stated on the label. Skin is considered excessive when it extends more than 1 ½ inches beyond the meat tissue of the part.

Parts – Wing



Grade A Whole Wing



**Grade A First
Segment Wing
Portion (Wing
Drumette)**

Parts – Wing



Grade A Second Segment Wing Portion (Wing Flat)



Grade B Wing with Feathers

Tolerance for feathers less than ½ inch:

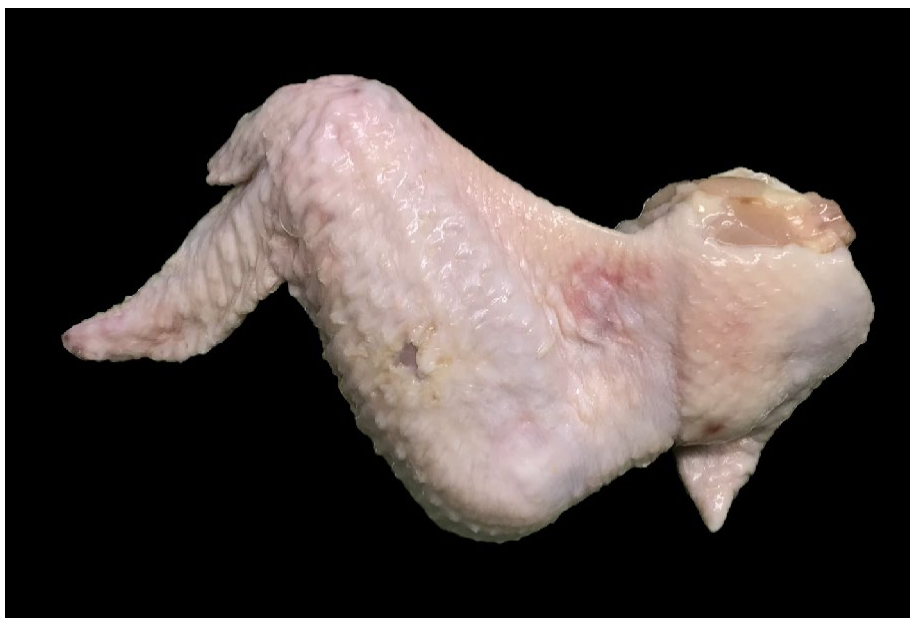
Grade A: 2 feathers

Grade B: 3 feathers

Grade C: 4 feathers

No Grade: more than 4 feathers

Parts – Wing



Grade A Wing with Exposed Flesh

Tolerance for Grade A parts is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.



Grade B Wing with Exposed Flesh

Tolerance for Grade B parts is up to $\frac{1}{3}$ area of flesh normally covered by the skin.

Parts – Wing



Grade A Wing with Borderline Discoloration on Back of Wing

Tolerance for light discoloration on parts is $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in diameter.



Grade A Wing with Moderate Discoloration

Tolerance for moderate discoloration on parts other than breast and leg is $\frac{3}{8}$ inch in diameter.

Parts – Wing



Grade B Second Segment Wing with Aggregate Moderate Discoloration

Tolerance for Grade B parts is 1 inch in diameter maximum aggregate area.



Grade B Wing with Moderate Discoloration

Tolerance for Grade B parts is 1 inch in diameter maximum aggregate area.

Parts – Wing



Grade A Wing after Wing Tip with Moderate Discoloration is Removed

Wings tips with discoloration can be removed to retain the quality of the part.



Grade C Wing with Moderate Discoloration

There is no limit for discoloration for Grade C parts so long as it does not render any part unfit for food.

Parts – Wing



Grade A Wing with Borderline Cut

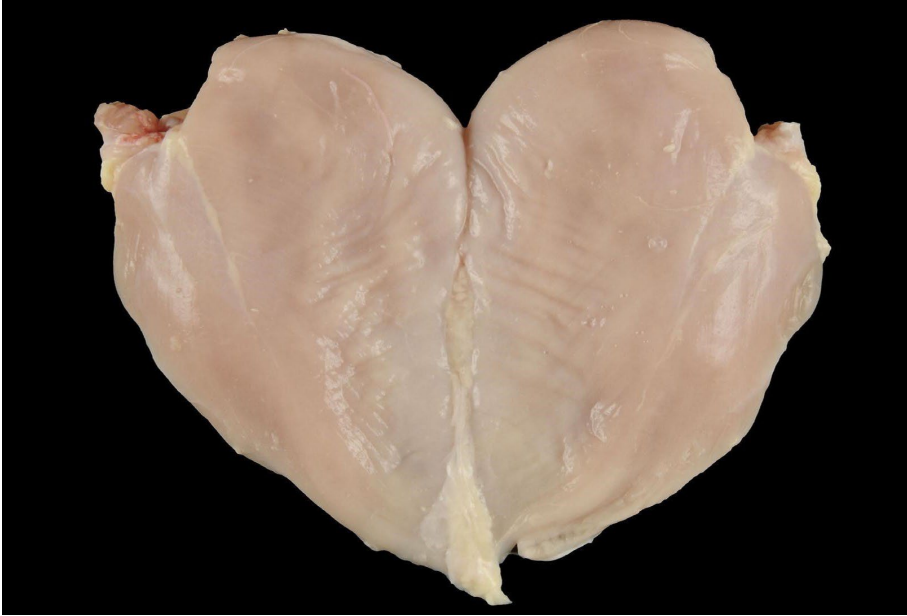
Cut occurred in tolerance zone referenced on page 6 as evident by presence of condyle.



Grade C Wing with Miscut

Cuts must occur within the tolerance zone referenced on page 6. Medullary cavity of the bone shaft is clearly exposed.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Breast



**Grade A Boneless
Skinless Whole
Breast Butterfly**



**Grade A Boneless
Skinless Half Breast**

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Breast



Grade A Boneless Skinless Breast Half with Acceptable Shape

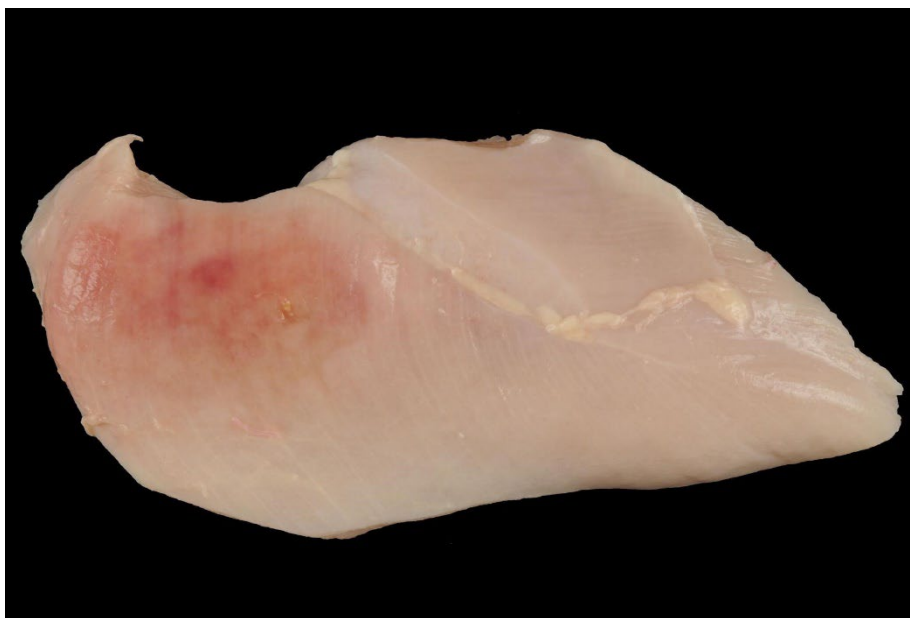
Trimming of the meat along the outer edges is permitted provided at least $\frac{1}{2}$ the part remains intact and the normal symmetrical appearance of the part is retained.



No Grade Boneless Skinless Breast with Skin

There is no tolerance for attached skin on boneless skinless parts.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Breast



No Grade Boneless Skinless Breast with Discoloration

There is no tolerance for light or moderate discoloration on boneless skinless parts. Only slight discoloration is allowed.



No Grade Boneless Skinless Breast Tip Removed

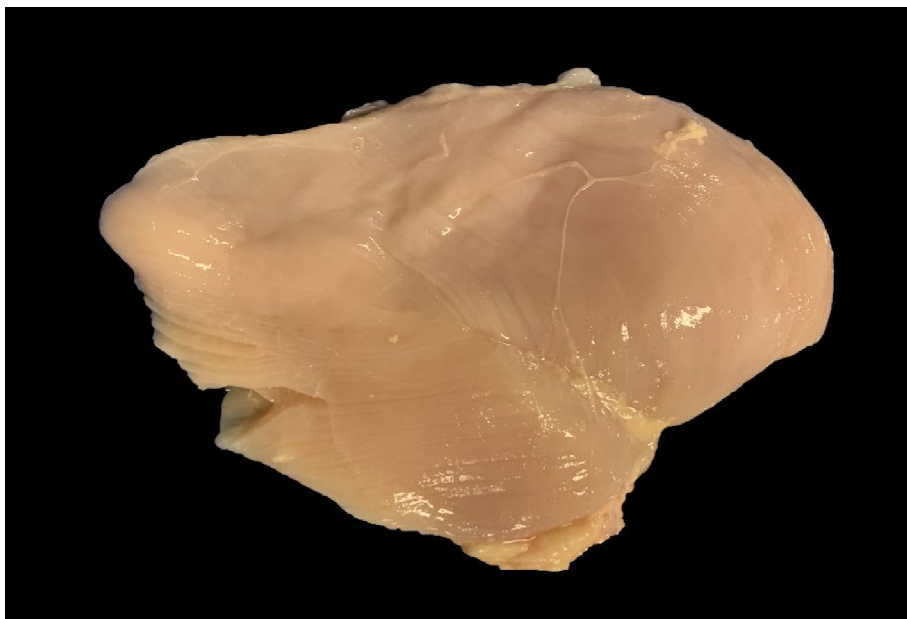
Trimming of the meat along the outer edges affected the normal symmetrical shape and appearance of the part.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Breast



Grade A Boneless Skinless Breast Borderline Tear and Minor Abrasion in Flesh

Minor abrasion and separation of the muscle tissue is permitted provided it does not detract from the overall appearance of the part.



Grade A Boneless Skinless Breast Borderline Tear with Grain of Muscle

Separation of the muscle tissue is permitted provided it does not detract from the overall appearance of the part.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Breast



Grade A Boneless Skinless Breast with Cut at Tip

Separation of the muscle tissue is permitted provided it does not detract from the overall appearance of the part.



No Grade Boneless Skinless Breast Split Tip

Separation of muscle tissue detracts from the overall appearance of the part.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Breast



No Grade Boneless Skinless Breast with Abrasion in Flesh

Abrasions resulting in an angular indentation as shown are not permitted. Minor flesh abrasions with smooth and even appearance that do not detract from the overall appearance are acceptable.



No Grade Boneless Skinless Breast with Over-Scalded Flesh

There is no tolerance for over-scalded flesh. Product is considered No Grade and should be shown to plant representative.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Breast



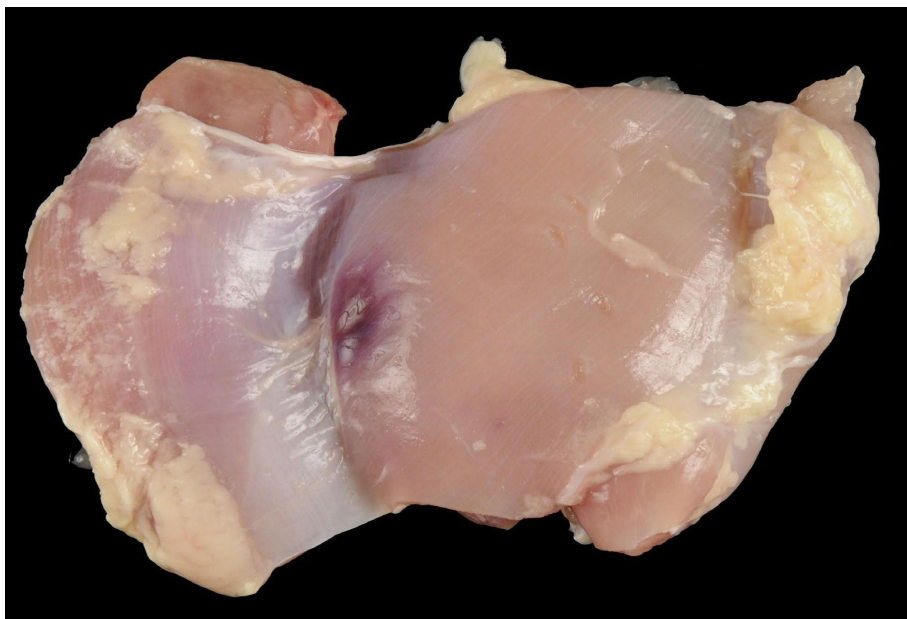
No Grade Boneless Skinless Breast with Serious Flesh Defect

There is no tolerance for serious flesh defects. Product is considered No Grade and should be shown to plant representative.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Thigh



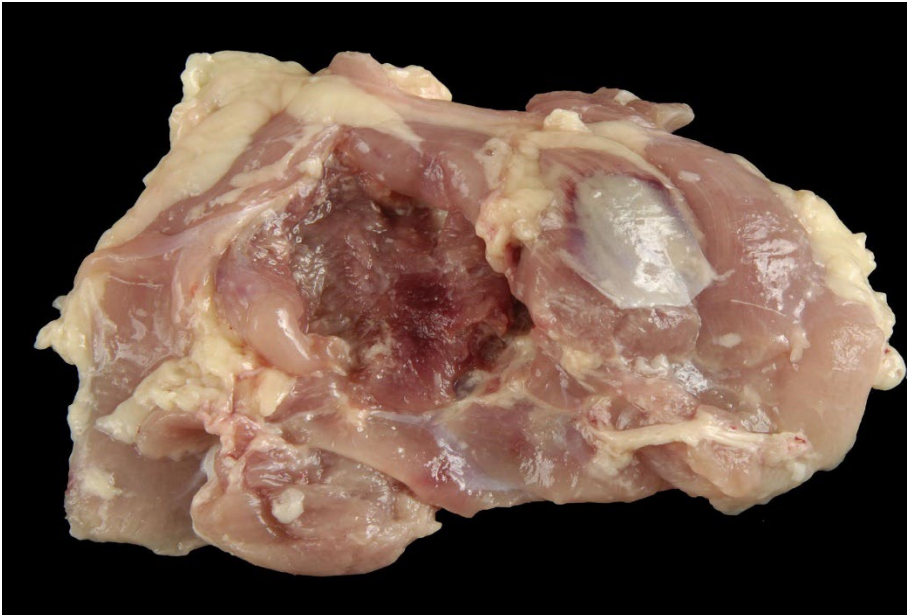
**Grade A Boneless
Skinless Thigh**



**No Grade Boneless
Skinless Thigh with
Moderate
Discoloration**

There is no tolerance for light or moderate discoloration on boneless skinless parts. Only slight discoloration is allowed.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Thigh



No Grade Boneless Skinless Thigh with Moderate Discoloration

There is no tolerance for light or moderate discoloration on boneless skinless parts. Only slight discoloration is allowed.



No Grade Boneless Skinless Thigh with Bone

There is no tolerance for bone or bone fragments in boneless skinless parts.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Drumstick



**Grade A Boneless
Skinless Drumstick**



**No Grade Boneless
Skinless Drumstick
with Bone**

There is no tolerance for bone or bone fragments in boneless skinless parts.

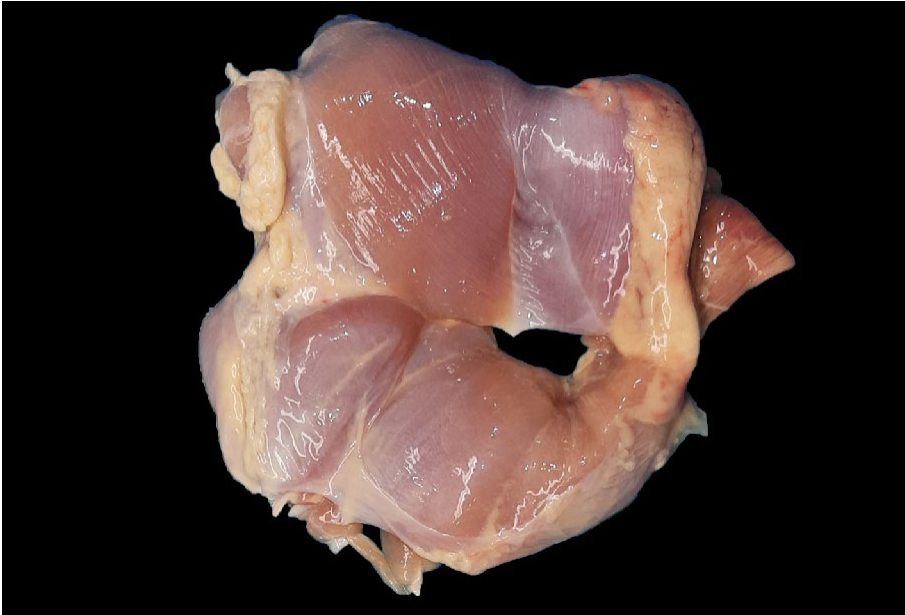
Boneless/Skinless Parts – Drumstick



No Grade Boneless Skinless Drumstick with excessive Tendon

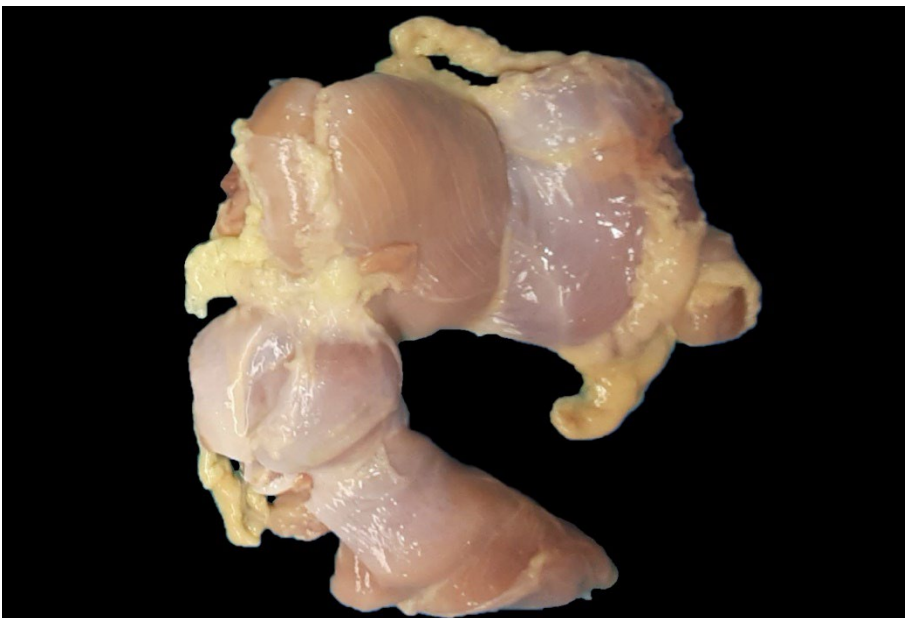
The tolerance for tendons in boneless skinless drums is $\frac{1}{2}$ inch beyond the meat tissue.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Whole Leg



Grade A Boneless Skinless Whole Leg

For boneless skinless legs, holes in the meat resulting from the removal of the patella (knee cap) are permitted provided the bulk of the drumstick and thigh remains intact and connected.



No Grade Boneless/Skinless Whole Leg

The bulk of the drumstick and thigh must remain intact and connected.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Tenderloin



Grade A Tenderloin



**Grade A Tenderloin
with Attached
Tendon**

Tendons normally associated with tenderloins are permitted. There is no limit for length of the tendon.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Tenderloin



Grade A Tenderloin with Slight Discoloration

Slight discoloration is permitted so long as it does not detract from the overall appearance of the part.



No Grade Tenderloin with Moderate Discoloration

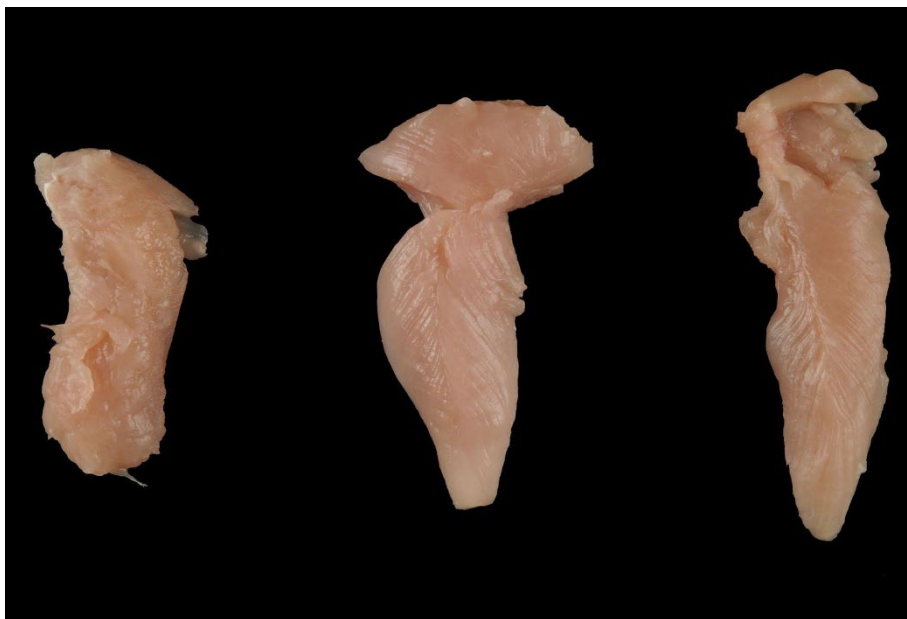
There is no tolerance for light or moderate discoloration on boneless skinless parts. Only slight discoloration is allowed.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Tenderloin



Grade A Tenderloins Exhibiting Borderline Flesh Separations

Separation of the muscle tissue is permitted, provided it does not detract from the overall appearance of the part.



No Grade Tenderloins Exhibiting Flesh Mutilation

Separation of the muscle tissue detracts from the overall appearance.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Tenderloin



Grade A Tenderloin with Maximum Acceptable Amount of Attached Tissue

Strands of tenderloin tissue not attached to the tendon may be present, provided they do not detract from the overall appearance of the product.



No Grade Tenderloin with Unacceptable Amount of Attached Tissue

Strands of tenderloin tissue detract from the overall appearance of the tendon.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Tenderloin



No Grade Tenderloin with Hole

There is no tolerance for holes in the muscle tissue.

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Size Reduced



Grade A Thin Sliced Breast



Grade A Thin Sliced Breast

Boneless/Skinless Parts – Size Reduced



Grade A Thin Sliced Breast with Natural Separation between the Muscles

Holes occurring naturally between muscles are acceptable. Holes occurring through muscle tissue would not be acceptable.



Grade A Thin Sliced Breast with Borderline Acceptable Shape

Variation in shape of the outer edges of the individual portions of meat are permitted.

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