



Meat Grading & Certification Branch

Required Marks of Inspection and/or Foreign Origin

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Instruction is to:

1. Prescribe the mark(s) of inspection and/or foreign origin with which meat and meat products must be identified to be eligible for grading and/or certification;
2. Delegate authority to the Assistant Directors of Grading and Certification for approving marks of foreign origin; and
3. Provide the guidelines to be followed when reexamining previously certified meat and meat products which are reentering the United States.

II. Policy

Consumer and meat industry confidence in the Meat Grading and Certification (MGC) Branch is dependent upon the ability of meat grading personnel to assure that graded and/or certified meat and meat products comply with applicable specifications, standards, instructions, etc. To maintain this confidence, it is essential that supervisors and graders assure this compliance as defined in the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) regulations governing the grading and certification of meats, prepared meats, and meat products (7 C.F.R., Section 54.5). Specifically, grading and/or certification service will be furnished for meat and meat products only if they originate from animals slaughtered or prepared in:

1. Federally inspected establishments under the jurisdiction of the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS);
2. Establishments operating under a State inspection service which has been officially recognized as being equal to the Federal Meat Inspection Program; or
3. Foreign establishments approved by FSIS for importing meat into the United States.

III. Required Marks of Inspection

Any product offered for grading or certification must bear an inspection legend of the Federal or State agency having inspection responsibility. Meat and meat products not bearing an inspection legend and products with a retained tag are not eligible for grading or certification. However, "measle" carcasses destined for a freezer may be

graded before freezing, provided the FSIS inspector permits grade marks on the carcass.

Supervisors and graders shall refer any questions regarding inspection legends to the appropriate local FSIS personnel.

IV. Required Marks on Meat of Foreign Origin

To be eligible for grading, imported meat must be marked as prescribed in Section 54.5 of the AMS regulations and Section III of this Instruction. Additionally, when imported meat is presented for grading, plant officials must obtain an exemption to Section 54.13 of the AMS regulations, which states: "Meat of all eligible species shall be graded only in the establishment where the animal was slaughtered or initially chilled..."

Assistant Directors of Grading and Certification are authorized to approve marks of foreign origin which meet the criteria set forth in Section 54.5 of the AMS regulations.

All approved marks of foreign origin will remain on file at the MGC Branch Office indefinitely. Foreign meats bearing grademarks and/or terms determined to be similar to those of the U.S. Department of Agriculture are not eligible for Federal grading until such marks or terms have been removed.

Meat graders who have questions regarding the grading of imported meat or suspect that carcasses offered for grading may be of foreign origin, although not represented as such by the applicant, shall contact their supervisor before applying any grademarks.

V. Meat Products Entering or Reentering the United States

Certified meat previously exported to a foreign country which is reentering the United States, as well as uncertified imported meat, is eligible for meat grading, certification, and/or product examination services only when admitted and accepted into the United States by inspectors employed by FSIS.

Meat graders and supervisors must ensure that the imported product(s) bear the appropriate inspection stamps or legends prior to performing any official meat grading and/or certification duties.

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