

United States Department of Agriculture Marketing and Regulatory Programs Agricultural Marketing Service Livestock and Seed Program

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Meat Grading & Certification Branch

CARCASS GRADING AND CERTIFICATION SERVICE STAFFING GUIDELINES

Purpose

This Instruction provides general guidance for Meat Grading and Certification (MGC) Branch supervisors and managers in determining assignment of personnel for applicants requesting carcass grading and/or Live Animal/Carcass Schedule certification service. In establishments where the primary MGC Branch activity is carcass grading and/or Live Animal/Carcass Schedule certification, MGC Branch supervisors and managers will evaluate the assignment relative to the criteria contained in the Staffing Categories section of this Instruction for recommended use of personnel.

Policy

It is MGC Branch policy to provide grading and certification services to applicants that exceed industry expectations for timely and effective service delivery. Additionally, all final staffing determinations will be made in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, instructions, and applicable provisions of the union contract.

Background

Cumulative Trauma Disorders (CTD) associated with repetitive motions are the leading cause of MGC Branch, Office of Worker's Compensation Program (OWCP) claims. In an effort to reduce employee injuries, several large volume plants with high speed chains participated in a pilot project that used additional graders on each shift to perform grading and certification duties. The results of the pilot project were that there was a positive impact on grader workload, plant productivity, efficiency, and the reduced repetitive motions associated with CTD. The success of that pilot project supports the staffing guidance contained in this Instruction.

Staffing Categories

MGC Branch supervisors and managers will consider the guidelines listed below, consult plant management, and apply their personal knowledge of each individual operation when determining the work assignments for MGC Branch graders:

 One grader: when up to 1,200 beef carcasses or 2,000 lamb carcasses are offered for grading and/or certification per shift and the grader applies all grade and certification stamps.

- Two graders: when the total number of beef carcasses offered for grading and/or certification ranges from 1,201 to 2,400 head per shift or 2,001 to 4,000 lamb carcasses are offered for grading and/or certification per shift and the graders apply all grade and certification stamps.
- Three graders: when the total number of beef carcasses offered for grading and/or certification ranges from 2,401 to 3,600 head per shift and the graders apply all grade and certification stamps.
- Four graders: when more than 3,600 beef carcasses are offered for grading and/or certification per shift and the graders apply all grade and certification stamps.

From time to time, the number of carcasses that are graded and/or certified may occasionally exceed the upper limits for a staffing level. Additional graders will only be considered when the number of carcasses that are offered for a particular staffing level is sustained for an extended period of time. Carcasses offered for re-examination will not be considered when determining staffing requirements.

In those establishments that provide a plant employee to apply the grade and/or certification stamps under the direct supervision of a grader, the Grading and Certification Director will determine appropriate grader staffing levels on a case-by-case basis. For plants utilizing approved beef carcass instrument grading systems for official USDA grade factors, the application of an official grade and/or certification stamp shall be in accordance with MGC Instruction 515, Beef Carcass Instrument Grading Procedures.

The complexity of the workload assignment will also be evaluated to ensure adequate staffing resources are available to perform the requested services.

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