



USDA QUALITY SYSTEM ASSESSMENT (QSA) PROGRAM SPECIFIED PRODUCT REQUIREMENTS FOR AGE AND SOURCE VERIFICATION

1 Purpose

This document provides the requirements for the USDA Quality System Assessment (QSA) Program for marketing U.S. beef that has been verified for age and source.

2 Scope

This document applies to U.S. companies, producers, backgrounders, and feedlots that supply cattle that have been verified for age and/or source. Companies must meet the specified product requirements through an approved QSA Program. The requirements for the QSA Program are defined in QAD 1002 Procedure: *Quality System Assessment (QSA) Program*. The QSA Program ensures that the specified product requirements are supported by a documented quality management system (QMS).

Only companies with an approved QSA Program for age and/or source verification may label and sell product as meeting the specified product requirements under the QSA Program.

3 Reference Documents

QAD 1000 Procedure: *Quality Systems Verification Programs General Policies and Procedures*

QAD 1002 Procedure: *Quality System Assessment (QSA) Program*

GU7309CCA *Additional Requirements for the USDA PVP and QSA Program*

[Official Listing of Approved USDA Quality System Assessment \(QSA\) Programs](#)

[Official Listing of Approved USDA Processed Verified Programs](#)

4 Additions to the USDA Quality System Assessment (QSA) Program Requirements

The specified product requirements listed in Section 5 of this procedure must be met through an approved QSA Program. The QSA Program ensures that the specified product requirements are supported by a documented QMS. In addition to the requirements listed in QAD 1002 Procedure, Section 7: *Program Requirements*, companies must also incorporate the following requirements into their QSA Program:

4.1 *Internal Audit*

4.1.1 The company must conduct internal audits at planned intervals.

4.1.2 The internal audits must determine whether the company's QMS:

- a) Conforms to the planned arrangements, to the requirements of this procedure, and to the QMS requirements established by the company; and



b) Is effectively implemented and maintained.

4.1.3 The company must have a documented procedure which defines:

- a) The planning of an audit program, which must consider the status and importance of the processes and areas to be audited, as well as the results of the previous audit;
- b) The audit criteria, scope, frequency, and methods;
- c) The selection criteria of the auditors and conduct of auditors which must ensure objectivity and impartiality of the audit process (Auditors must not audit their own work.);
- d) The responsibilities for planning and conducting audits;
- e) The reporting of results;
- f) The follow-up activities (Follow-up activities must include the verification of the actions taken and the reporting of the verification results.); and
- g) The maintenance of records.

4.1.4 Within the area being audited, management must ensure that actions are taken without undue delay to eliminate detected non-conformances and their causes.

4.1.5 The company must maintain records of the internal audits.

4.2 *Company's Suppliers Listing*

4.2.1 The company must maintain an approved suppliers listing.

4.2.2 The approved suppliers listing must:

- a) Identify the supplier's name, address, and approval date; and
- b) Be available to the USDA for review.

4.2.2 The company must also maintain the date that suppliers were removed from the suppliers listing.

5 **Specified Product Requirements**

5.1 Eligible products must be derived from cattle that are less than 30 months of age at the time of harvest, or other specified age, using either of the following methods (5.1.1 or 5.1.2.).

5.1.1 Cattle may be aged at the time of harvest using the dentition method in accordance with the FSIS reference document *Using Dentition to Age Cattle*.

5.1.2 Cattle may be traced to live animal production records. Verification activities for age requirements must be conducted at the harvest, feedlot, and producer levels as required by



the submitted QSA Program. Records used to verify this requirement must meet any one of the following criteria (5.1.2.1. to 5.1.2.3):

5.1.2.1 Individual Animal Age Verification

- a) Animals must have a unique individual identification.
- b) Records must be sufficient to trace the individual animal back to ranch records.
- c) Records must indicate the actual date of birth of the animal and must accompany each animal through the process.

5.1.2.2 Group Age Verification

- a) All animals within a group and born during the same birthing season must be individually identified.
- b) Records must indicate the actual date of birth of the first calf of the birthing season.
- c) The age of all calves within a group must be *derived from* the actual date of birth of the first calf born within the group.
- d) Records indicating the date the bulls are given access to the cows may be used as a supplementary measure verifying the oldest age of animals in the group which is determined in 5.1.2.2 b).

5.1.2.3 USDA Process Verified and USDA Quality System Assessment Programs.

- a) The USDA Process Verified Program must include age verification as a process verified point as defined in 5.1.1 or 5.1.2.
- b) The USDA Quality System Assessment Program for feedlots and producers must include age verification as a specified product requirement as defined in 5.1.2.1 or 5.1.2.2.
- c) All animals that are aged by 5.1.2.1 or 5.1.2.2 must be individually identified.

5.2 Identification Requirements –

- 5.2.1 All cattle complying with 5.1.1 or 5.1.2 must be uniquely identified. These identification marks must be transferrable through processing, packaging, storage, and shipping to insure the integrity of the process and the product.
- 5.2.2 Shipping documentation (bills of lading, shipping manifests, or letters of guarantee) must have the statement “Product Meets QSA Program Requirements for Age and/or Source Verification” and must clearly identify the product and product quantity.



6 Listing of Approved Programs

Only U.S. companies that have an approved USDA QSA Program which meets the specified product requirements for Age and Source Verification will be listed on the *Official Listing of Approved USDA Quality System Assessment (QSA) Programs*.

7 Responsibilities

U.S. companies must meet all policies and procedures outlined in this procedure, QAD 1000 Procedure: *Quality Systems Verification Program General Policies and Procedures*, and QAD 1002 Procedure: *Quality System Assessment (QSA) Program*.

Jeff Waite, Branch Chief
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