



## PORK GRADING METHODS AND PROCEDURES

### Purpose

This Procedure defines all procedures in the classing, grading, and application of official grade marks of pork carcasses in accordance with the official grade standards. To simplify, the terms "carcass" and "carcasses" also means "side" or "sides."

### Applicant Responsibilities

1. Provide Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) approved purple meat branding ink.
2. Make carcasses or sides easily accessible in a manner which eliminates the need for the grader to move them.
3. When required, properly rib carcasses at least 10 minutes prior to grading.
4. Adequately chill carcasses.
5. Adequately illuminate grading area and holding coolers.

### Grading Requirements

1. Grade only as carcasses in establishments where the animals are slaughtered or initially chilled, except when an exemption has been granted ([QAD 106 Procedure Grading Exemptions](#)).
2. All carcasses must bear the required inspection marks prior to grading or, classing.
3. Retained carcasses or sides shall not be graded without specific authorization from an FSIS inspector.
4. For split carcasses, the final grade will reflect the "highest" of grades as determined from either side.

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## Procedures

### 1. Classing.

- a. Barrow, gilt, and sow carcasses are graded, but not identified for class.
- b. Boar and stag carcasses are not graded.

### 2. Grading.

- a. Grades for barrow and gilt carcasses are based on quality and expected yield of the four lean cuts (ham, loin, picnic shoulder, and Boston butt). Grades U.S. 1 - 4 and U.S. Utility.
- b. Quality characteristics (acceptable or unacceptable) are determined by the loin eye muscle at the 10th rib. If not ribbed, other exposed major muscle surfaces can be used, or determine indirectly based on the quality-indicating characteristics that are evident in the carcass (firmness of fat and lean, feathering between ribs, and color of lean).
- c. Carcasses must have a belly with sufficient thickness to be suitable for bacon production to be considered acceptable in quality.
- d. Grades for sow carcasses are based on differences in yields of lean cuts and of fat cuts and differences in quality of cuts. Grades U.S. I - 3, Medium, and Cull.
- e. Soft, or oily sow carcasses can be graded provided they are identified as soft or oily along with the grade.
- f. Do Not Grade:
  1. In natural light, on loading docks, at cooler doors, on rails from which carcasses may be directly loaded for shipment, or any other area that does not provide an ample opportunity for supervisory review prior to shipment.



### 3. Identification Methods.

- a. Only Quality Assessment Division (QAD) employees and officially-licensed employees may apply grade identification stamps. Plant personnel may apply grade identification stamps under the direct supervision of QAD personnel. Each instance must be approved in advance by the local Supervisor.
- b. Can use the Yield Grade Band Applicator to identify carcasses.
- c. Roller branding is not applicable to pork carcasses.
- d. Applicants have the option to stamp specific wholesale cuts (ham, loin Boston Butt, and shoulder).
- e. Grade mark Location for Pork (Exhibit A) shows proper location for grade marks on the carcass.

### 4. Regrading.

- a. See [QAD 506 Procedure Removal of Incorrect Grade marks.](#)

## References

1. [Official United States Standards for Grades of Pork Carcasses.](#)
2. Code of Federal Regulations- [Title 7](#) → [Subtitle B](#) → [Chapter I](#) → [Subchapter C](#)

## Change Record

The following changes were made to the 04/01/08 revision of this document:

1. The mail stop in the header was updated to the most recent record.