



July 21, 2006

To: USDA Process Verified Programs and USDA Quality System Assessment (QSA) Programs that include age verification.

From: James Riva, Branch Chief

Subject: Live Animal Production Records to Verify Date of Birth

To qualify cattle for export to Japan, or to make an "age verification" claim under the Process Verified Program or the QSA Program, the company must meet the requirements below. These requirements are outlined in the *ARC 1030J Procedure, USDA Export Verification (EV) Program Specified Product Requirements for Beef - Japan*, dated December 12, 2005.

Cattle must be traceable to live animal production records. Verification activities for age requirements must be conducted at the slaughter, 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 (5.2.1.1. to 5.2.1.3):

- 5.2.1.1 Individual Animal Age Verification
 - 5.2.1.1.1 Animals must have a unique individual identification.
 - 5.2.1.1.2 Records must be sufficient to trace the individual animal back to ranch records.
 - 5.2.1.1.3 Records must indicate the actual date of birth of the animal and must accompany each animal through the process.
- 5.2.1.2 Group Age Verification
 - 5.2.1.2.1 All animals within a group and born during the same birthing season must be individually identified.
 - 5.2.1.2.2 Records must indicate the actual date of birth of the first calf of the birthing season.
 - 5.2.1.2.3 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.
 - 5.2.1.2.4 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 5.2.1.2.2.

Assigning an arbitrary date of birth based on the producer's production practices is not an acceptable method for age verification; and does not meet the requirements. Producers who have more than 1 calving season during a year must implement a method of identification that ensures the calves from each season are identified, traceable, and controlled. Producers who calve throughout the year must individually identify each calf and maintain individual dates of births. Additionally, artificial insemination dates and bull turn out dates may be used only as a supplementary measure to verify date of birth.



**Agricultural
Marketing
Service**

**Livestock
and Seed
Program**

**Audit, Review,
and Compliance
Branch**

**100 Riverside Parkway
Suite 135
Fredericksburg, VA 22406**

Live animal production records which show the actual date of birth must be supported by the producer's production practices and records. Additionally, records must be retained for a period projected to be 1 year beyond the date of export of meat products to Japan. For each industry sector, the minimum requirement must be:

1. Cow-calf operations - 3 years from date of birth;
2. Yearling stocker operations - 2 years from date of sale or transfer to feedlot
3. Auction markets - 30 months from date of sale
4. Feed lot operations - 18 months from date of slaughter

Please ensure that your approved quality manual clearly identifies these requirements; that all persons performing supplier evaluations are properly trained; and that all approved suppliers meet the requirements. Non-conformances to these requirements may result in suspension of your approved Program.