

REVISION 02 09/22/89

OPI: RP/SLD

GRADEMARK LABELING ON MEAT AND POULTRY PRODUCTS

I. PURPOSE

This directive provides procedures for use by inspectors to ensure accuracy of grade labeling on meat and poultry products.

II. CANCELLATION

This directive cancels FSIS Directive 6810.1, Revision 1, dated 4/15/86.

III. REASON FOR REISSUANCE

This directive has been revised to update Section VI. A. 2, page 2, to conform with recent regulation changes; and to provide more detailed instructions in Section VI. B, page 5, regarding poultry grading at non-resident grading locations.

IV. REFERENCES

MPI Regulations, Sections 317.8 and 381.129.
Subchapter C - Regulations and Standards under the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946.
7 CFR Sections 54.11, 54.16, 54.104 - 54.107, 54.115 - 54.117, 54.123, 54.125, 54.126, 54.134, 54.135, and 70.80.
SLD Policy Memos 101 and 101A.

V. ABBREVIATIONS

The following will appear as abbreviated in this directive:

IIC Inspector In Charge
MGC Meat Grading and Certification Branch, AMS
MPIO Meat and Poultry Inspection Operations
PGB Poultry Grading Branch, AMS

VI. PROCEDURES

A. Labeling Meat Quality and Yield Grade.

1. Certified Product. Labels or container markings which refer to Federal specifications (by number and/or words) shall only be approved for use with the understanding that the appropriate meat products are certified by MGC as meeting the required specification. For example, "Ground Beef - PP-B-2120," "Schedule SL-Sliced Bacon," and "IMPS Item No. 114 - Beef Shoulder Clod" are acceptable labels or container markings only if such products are certified by MGC. However, product

identified as "Ground Beef," "Sliced Bacon," or "Item No. 114, Beef Shoulder Clod" will not require certification by the MGC.

2. Official USDA Grademarks for Meat.

a. Quality. The following USDA quality grademarks may be applied to carcasses by MGC personnel:

(1). Beef Prime, Choice, *** Select, Standard, Commercial, Utility, Cutter, Canner.

(2). Veal/Calves--prime, Choice, Good, Standard, Utility.

(3). Lamb/Yearling Mutton--Prime, Choice, Good, Utility.

(4). Mutton--Prime, Choice, Good, Utility, Cull.

(5). Pork (except sows) U.S. 1, U.S. 2, U.S. 3, U.S. 4, U.S. Utility.

(6). Sows--U.S. 1, U.S. 2, U.S. 3, Medium, Cull.

b. Yield. The following USDA yield grademarks may be applied to carcasses by MGC personnel: Beef/Ovine 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 .

c. Official USDA Grademarks on Carcasses and Cuts.

(1). When steer, heifer, cow, or bullock beef and ovine are officially graded, the grade may consist of a quality designation, a yield designation, or both a quality and yield designation. Slaughter bulls are yield graded only. Veal and calves are quality graded only. ***

(2). When Official U.S. Standards for Grades of Carcass Beef specifically prohibits the unnecessary trimming or alteration of external fat on beef carcasses to be presented for grade determination. Inspection personnel observing such actions shall report the matter to his/her supervisor and the local meat grading personnel.

(3). When wholesale or retail cuts from officially graded carcasses are to be labeled or identified with official grade names, such cuts or their containers must bear the official USDA grademark--Prime, Choice, Select, etc.--as applied by a USDA grader. Containers of USDA graded beef cuts may be labeled in the following manner, provided control procedures outlined in this directive are followed.

(a). If containers of cuts of mixed quality and yield grades are grade labeled, they may be labeled with the lowest quality grade included in the container and the words "or higher" (e.g.,

USDA Choice or Higher). This may include all Choice or all Prime or any mixture of the two grades.

(b). If containers of cuts are to be labeled for yield grade, the labeling must include all yield grades of beef in the containers (e.g., Yield Grade 1, 2, 3). *** Other grade labeling terminology which is more specific than the above guidelines (e.g., USDA Select or Choice Yield Grade 2 or 3) is permitted.

(c). Abbreviations for the quality and yield grademarks are not acceptable as labeling for USDA grades. Markings as Ch, Cho, C, or Y, etc., shall not be permitted.

(d). USDA grade designations may be preceded by the name of the firm provided the product is prepared from USDA graded meat. For example, labeling meat or containers "Troyer's Choice" is permissible provided it is USDA graded Choice meat.

(4). Quality grade or yield grade identification labeling shall be printed on the containers or on pressure sensitive labels which shall be applied to containers and shall not be handwritten. These labels shall bear the USDA grade designation and the inspection legend if the legend is not printed on or applied to the container.

(5). If official USDA grademarks are removed during cutting or trimming, one of the following procedures must be implemented.

(a). All cutting, trimming, packaging, and labeling must be done under continuous USDA grader's supervision.

(b). At a plant's request, cuts may be rebranded according to procedures acceptable to MGC.

(c). Any other procedure developed by the plant which ensures control over grademark and labeling of products may be submitted. This procedure shall be submitted through the IIC to the MPIO regional office for final approval. These approved procedures will be monitored by MPIO inspectors. A copy of the MPIO approval letter should be sent to the appropriate MGC Regional Director, Agricultural Marketing Service, listed below.

Eastern Region:

Regional Director
USDA, AMS, LS
Meat Grading and Certification Branch

800 Roosevelt Road
Building A - Suite 330
Glen Ellyn, IL 60137

Area of responsibility: The States of Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Missouri.

Southern Region: Regional Director
USDA, AMS, LS
Meat Grading and Certification Branch
Earl Cabell Federal Building
1100 Commerce Street
Room 7C59
Dallas, TX 75242

Area of responsibility: The States of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, and New Mexico.

Western Region: Regional Director
USDA, AMS, LS
Meat Grading and Certification Branch
400 Livestock Exchange Building
Denver, CO 80216-2139

Area of responsibility: The States of Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, Washington, Oregon, California, Hawaii, and Alaska.

(7). If under an approved grade labeling program, an official grademark does not comply with the labeling requirements or is otherwise misused, the MPIO inspector shall:

(a). Retain all product packaged and labeled with such grade name and produced during the shift in which the deviation is discovered until the grade name is removed or obliterated.

(b). Through IIC, inform MPIO Area Supervisor and, if plant has Federal grading service, MGC Branch Regional Director.

(c). Discontinue product labeling until plant management provides both the MGC Branch Regional Director and the MPIO Area Supervisor with a written explanation of the incident and action taken to preclude a recurrence. Upon the concurrence of the MGC Branch Regional Director and the approval of the MPIO Area Supervisor, product labeling may be reinstated.

(d). If requirements are not met, the IIC, in cooperation with plant management, shall initiate

action to rescind approved labels or other plant-owned marking devices bearing official grade names.

B. Poultry Grade Labeling at Non-resident Grading locations. When previously graded and officially identified poultry products are repackaged and identified with official grade identification at non-resident grading locations, the control procedures outlined in this directive should be followed.

1. Product must have been officially identified with the grademark when received at the repackaging location.

2. Parts may not be cut from Grade A whole carcasses at the repackaging location and subsequently identified with the grademark. Parts cut from U.S. Grade A identified whole birds may be labeled as "cut from U.S. Grade A."

3. Repackaging plants must submit through the IIC to the MPIO regional office for final approval a copy of the procedures developed to ensure control over grademark and labeling of products. These approved procedures will be monitored by MPIO inspectors. A copy of the MPIO approval letter shall be sent to the appropriate Poultry Regional Director, Agricultural Marketing Service, listed below.

Gastonia Region: Regional Director
USDA, AMS, PY
635 Cox Road, Suite F
Gastonia, NC 28054

Area of responsibility: The States of Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, Virgin Islands, West Virginia.

Little Rock Region: Regional Director
USDA, AMS, PY
#1 Natural Resources Drive
P.O. Box 5674
Little Rock, AR 72215

Area of responsibility: The States of Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio,

Des Moines Region: Regional Director
USDA, AMS, PY
Room 777
210 Walnut Street
Des Moines, IA 50309

Area of responsibility: The States of Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Wisconsin.

Modesto Region: Regional Director
USDA, AMS, PY
World Plaza Building

1508 Coffee Road
Suite D
Modesto, CA 95355

Area of responsibility: The States of Alaska, Arizona, Colorado, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.

4. If under the approved grade labeling program an official grademark does not comply with FSIS labeling requirements or is otherwise misused, the MPIO inspector shall:

a. Retain all product packaged and labeled with official grade identification and produced during the shift in which the deviation is discovered until the grade identification is removed or obliterated.

b. Through the IIC, inform MPIO Area Supervisor, and the PGB Regional Director.

c. Discontinue product labeling until plant management provides both the PGB Regional Director and the MPIO Area Supervisor with a written explanation of the incident and action taken to preclude a recurrence. Upon the concurrence of the PGB Regional Director and the approval of the MPIO Area Supervisor, product labeling may be reinstated.

d. If requirements are not met, the IIC, in cooperation with plant management, shall initiate action to rescind approval of labels bearing official grade identification.

W.S. Horne
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Meat and Poultry Inspection Operations