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AGRICULTURE**

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I NSTITUTIONAL

M EAT

P URCHASE

S PECIFICATIONS

FOR GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

**INTERIM
APPROVED BY USDA**

EFFECTIVE DATE - JUNE 1996

INSTITUTIONAL MEAT PURCHASE SPECIFICATIONS

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) through its Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) develops and maintains the Institutional Meat Purchase Specifications (IMPS) for meat and meat products. The complete IMPS series includes the following 10 documents:

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| General Requirements | |
| Quality Assurance Provisions | |
| Fresh Beef | Series 100 |
| Fresh Lamb and Mutton..... | Series 200 |
| Fresh Veal and Calf | Series 300 |
| Fresh Pork | Series 400 |
| Cured, Cured & Smoked, & Fully Cooked Pork Products | Series 500 |
| Cured, Dried, and Smoked Beef Products | Series 600 |
| Edible By-Products | Series 700 |
| Sausage Products | Series 800 |

These specifications are recommended for use for any meat product procurement activity. For assurance that procured items comply with these detailed requirements, the USDA, through its Meat Grading and Certification Branch, provides a voluntary Meat Certification Service. For labeling purposes, only product certified by the Meat Grading and Certification Branch (MGCB) may contain the letters "IMPS" on the product label. Purchasers desiring this service should contact:

USDA, AMS, Livestock and Seed Program
Meat Grading and Certification Branch
Stop 0248, Room 2628 S-Bldg
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-0248 Telephone: (202) 720-1113 FAX: (202) 690-4119

Internet Address: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/lc-mg.htm>

For any assistance regarding these documents and for additional copies, please contact:

USDA, AMS, Livestock and Seed Program
Standardization Branch
Stop 0254, Room 2628 S-Bldg
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-0254 Telephone: (202) 720-4486

SCOPE

The purpose of this document is to provide the purchaser with a variety of options for meat handling, packing and packaging, and certification, that conform to good commercial practice. Contractors are responsible for delivering products that comply with all contractual and specification requirements and are advised to set up a quality control system designed to assure compliance.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

For the purposes of determining acceptance of any IMPS item, the following definitions are provided.

Chilled. Meat product having an internal temperature greater than 28°F(-2.2°C) and is held under refrigerated storage temperatures.

Continuous operation. A processing method that proceeds without excessive or unnecessary interruptions.

Fresh. Product, that has not been canned, cured, smoked or cooked.

Fresh-Chilled. Fresh product that has never been previously frozen.

Frozen. Product that has an internal temperature less than 28°F (-2.2°C) and is stored at less than 0°F (-17.8°C).

Stockpile. Product that is produced and stored according to IMPS requirements without a contract or purchase order.

REGULATORY REQUIREMENT

All meat and meat products will originate from animals slaughtered in establishments regularly operated under the Meat and Poultry Inspection Operations (FSIS) regulations of the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS), or under a system of meat inspection approved by FSIS. In addition, meats and meat products will be processed in establishments, that meet this requirement.

ORDERING DATA TO BE SPECIFIED BY THE PURCHASER

These General Requirements contain optional ordering data, that pertains to:

- I. MEAT HANDLING**
- II. PACKAGING AND PACKING**
- III. USDA CERTIFICATION**

All other purchaser options are contained within the individual IMPS documents. In the front of each document are the ordering data options available for the species or type of product specified within that document. Additionally, located within the individual item descriptions, are the specific options available for each item. Ordering data will be specified by the purchaser in the contract or purchase order.

The contractor will assure that products being delivered will be in compliance with all applicable contracts, purchase orders and specification requirements. Final acceptance of

all products will be by the consignee at the point of delivery. The consignee will thoroughly review each incoming delivery to insure that temperatures, box markings, appropriate stamps, delivery dates and other obvious contractual or specification requirements have been met.

I. MEAT HANDLING

A. STATE OF REFRIGERATION

If state of refrigeration is not specified, the product will be delivered in the chilled state. The purchaser may specify the maximum length of time product may be held in the freezer prior to shipping. The purchaser will specify the state of refrigeration for product delivery:

- Chilled
- Frozen

- X The use of dry ice or other USDA, FSIS approved food refrigerants (except H₂O ice) will be permitted to maintain temperatures.
- X Contractors will assure that all products are packaged, processed and stored in refrigerated areas that are adequate to maintain product excellence until time of delivery.

Product failing to meet the following applicable temperature requirements will not be acceptable.

1. **Chilled.** The contractor will be responsible for delivering chilled product at a temperature of not less than 28°F (-2.2°C) or higher than 40°F (4.4°C).
2. **Frozen.** The contractor will be responsible for delivering frozen products at or below 0°F (-17.8°C). The purchaser may specify portion cuts to be individually quick frozen (IQF). Product exceeding 0°F (-17.8°C) at the time of shipment will not be acceptable. The finding of any product showing evidence of deterioration due to mishandling, thawing and refreezing, or freezer burn will not be acceptable.

Additionally, purchasers may select any of the following freezing options.

FREEZING OPTION 1 - Product will be frozen to an internal temperature of not higher than 0°F (-17.8°C) within 72 hours from the time of final fabrication of the lot.

FREEZING OPTION 2 - Product will be brought to an internal temperature not to exceed 0°F (-17.8°C) within 24 hours from the time of final fabrication of the lot. (This option is recommended for portion-cut items that are IQF).

FREEZING OPTION 3 - Product will be required to an internal temperature of -10°F (-23.0°C) or lower at the time of shipment. Because most conveyances are not capable of maintaining such low temperatures, purchasers may experience some variation above the -10°F (-23.0°C) temperature requirement during transport. However, frozen product will not be delivered above 0°F (-17.8°C).

B. PRODUCTION, TEMPERATURE AND TIME LIMITATIONS

1. **Products to be delivered chilled.** Chilled meat products will be in excellent condition and maintain an internal temperature of not less than 28°F (-2.2°C) or higher than 50°F (10°C) provided product is processed and packed on the same calendar day. Product not processed on the same calendar day of initial determination for excellent condition may be held for further processing provided the internal temperature is not less than 28°F (-2.2°C) or higher than 40°F (4.4°C) at the time of further processing. Unless otherwise specified by the purchaser or within an IMPS item description, fresh IMPS items to be delivered chilled will not be derived from meat that has been previously frozen.
2. **Products to be delivered frozen.** IMPS fresh products to be delivered frozen will be determined to be in excellent condition in the fresh-chilled state. All product to be frozen will be placed in the freezer within 4 hours after final fabrication of the involved lot.
 - a. **Same-day Processing.** Chilled meat products to be further processed and frozen on the same calendar day will maintain an internal temperature of no higher than 50°F (10°C) during processing. Meat exceeding 50°F (10°C), but not exceeding 65°F (18.3°C), may be processed provided that: (1) the meat is proven to be from animals slaughtered not earlier than the previous calendar day; (2) there is no evidence of odors or darkening or discoloration of fat or lean; and (3) the meat is processed and placed into the freezer before the end of the calendar day on that it is first offered.
 - b. **Fresh-chilled storage.** Meat not processed on the same calendar day may be held up to 72 hours from the time the container holding boneless meat is sealed, provided the meat does not exceed 40°F (4.4°C) at the time offered for further processing.

However, if the temperature of the meat at the time offered for grinding exceeds 40°F (4.4°C), but is less than 50°F (10°C), that meat may be processed on the same calendar day provided it is in excellent condition. Fresh-chilled boneless meat destined for use in the finished product, but held for more than 72 hours from the time of initial determination of excellent condition may be processed provided the meat does not exceed 40°F (4.4°C) and is determined to be in excellent condition using the stationary lot reexamination criteria in the IMPS Quality Assurance Provisions.
 - c. **Frozen Storage** - Unless otherwise specified by the purchaser, fresh-chilled meat not processed on the same calendar day of determination for excellent condition requirements, may be frozen and stockpiled for later use, provided it is processed not more than 60 days from the date of initial examination. The boneless meat will be frozen in accordance with Freezing Option 1. The meat will be maintained frozen during storage, and the internal temperature will not exceed 40°F (4.4°C) when further processing continues.

Frozen meat, that is subsequently processed into the final IMPS item, may remain stored in the frozen state prior to delivery no longer than 90 days from the date packed. Frozen and tempered meat products, miscut steaks, miscut diced meat, and/or trimmings derived from meat previously frozen and tempered to facilitate slicing, dicing, or trimming may be further processed into ground meat. However, this product will be ground on the same calendar day of slicing, dicing, or trimming and will not exceed 40°F (4.4°C) at the time offered for grinding.

When the purchaser does not specify a maximum length of freezer storage prior to delivery, carcasses, primal cuts and roasts may remain in the frozen state no longer than 150 days from the date the product was initially frozen. Ground, flaked, diced, portion cut and sausage items may remain in the frozen state, no longer than 90 days from the date the product was initially frozen. The contractor will provide documentation to the purchaser verifying length of freezer storage.

3. **Ground, Chopped, Flaked and Formed Meat Production.** In addition to the above listed criteria, the temperature of all ground, chopped, and flaked products immediately after final reduction in size will not exceed 45°F (7.2°C). Frozen product or dry ice may be added during the grinding, chopping, flaking and/or blending process to maintain this temperature in the finished product. However, ground products with a temperature greater than 45°F (7.2°C), but not greater than 50°F (10°C), will be acceptable provided that: 1) the temperature of the product is reduced to 45°F (7.2°C) or below after packaging, but before packing into the shipping containers, and 2) the temperature reduction occurs within 30 minutes of the time of final grinding.

Unless otherwise specified, product to be ground, chopped or flaked, will be processed and packaged during a continuous operation. While unforeseen mechanical breakdowns do occur and may be considered an exception to the continuous operation definition, in no case will ground product exceed 40°F (4.4°C) or be held in excess of 8 hours prior to packaging.

C. METAL DETECTION

When specified by the purchaser, meat items will be subject to testing for metal contamination. Testing will be conducted after fabrication of the finished product (but may take place before or after patty formation) and before or after packaging. For bulk ground meat or for stacked patties or patties tested after packing, the vendor will install and operate equipment capable of detecting the presence of a 3.0 mm, 440 stainless steel test standard. For patties tested in single patty layers before final packaging, the equipment used will be capable of detecting the presence of a 1.5 mm, 440 stainless steel test standard.

II. PACKAGING AND PACKING

The contractor will assure that the materials used for packaging and packing comply with FSIS, FSIS regulations. The purchaser may specify: 1) any of the following packaging methods that are applicable to products procured, and 2) the number of items to be placed into each package.

A. PACKAGING

1. Carcasses, sides, quarters, and primal cuts or combinations thereof to be delivered frozen will be: (1) bagged in a crinkled paper bag and one stockinet, or (2) completely wrapped in plastic and one stockinet, (3) completely wrapped with plastic or vacuum packaged and boxed (see Packing) unless otherwise specified. Carcasses, sides, quarters, and primal cuts or combinations thereof to be delivered chilled, need not be wrapped or boxed unless otherwise specified by the purchaser.
2. Fabricated bone-in and boneless cuts; cured, smoked and dried meat; and edible by-products that are not individually packaged, will be packed into boxes completely lined with plastic bags. Product may be individually wrapped or layer packed with waxed paper or plastic material normally used for this purpose or vacuum packaged.
3. Bulk packaged trimmings and/or coarse ground products that are to be frozen and stockpiled, or are intended for further processing at a later date, will be packed into containers without the use of plastic liner bags. The containers will be wax impregnated or the interior panel's wax lined or plastic film laminated.
4. Bulk ground and diced meat items will be packaged in plastic bags or casings. Filled bags or casings will have practically all air pockets forced out through the open end and will be closed by metal or plastic clips, tying, or folding to completely cover the product. When closed by folding, to avoid possible purge into the container, the open end of the bag will extend far enough beyond the product so that the bag end can be folded over the top of the packaged product. The purchaser may specify product to be vacuum packaged without the use of metal or plastic clips.
5. Portion-cut products will be placed in fiberboard boxes lined with a plastic bag. The open end of the bag will overlap at the top to completely cover the product. Individual layers of product will be completely separated with waxed paper or plastic material normally used for this purpose. Portion cuts may be individually vacuum packaged.
6. Patties will be packed in boxes completely lined with plastic bags. The open end of the bag will overlap at the top to completely cover the product. The patties will be arranged in stacks and each patty within a stack will be separated by waxed patty paper(s) (one sheet waxed on both sides or two sheets when waxed on one side) and the stacks will be separated from each other by a full height divider. The divider will be constructed from paperboard and treated to prevent adherence to

the stacked patties. When the net weight of the patties and the immediate container is 10 pounds (4.5 kg) or less, dividers are not required. Patties may be layer packed, that separates the layers of patties with waxed paper or sheets of plastic material used for this purpose.

NOTE: When individual stacks are bagged, it is not necessary to line the boxes with plastic bags or separate stacked patties with dividers.

7. Patties that are individually quick frozen (IQF) will be packed in fiberboard boxes lined with a plastic bag. The open end will overlap at the top to fully cover the product (except when individual stacks are bagged). At the purchaser's option, IQF patties may be stacked with or without patty paper or dividers. Oven proof bags for cooked products may be specified by the purchaser.
8. Unless otherwise specified in the purchase order, products such as frankfurters, sliced bacon, sliced dried beef, linked or bulk pork or breakfast sausage, etc., will be packaged and placed in immediate containers as illustrated in the following:

- a. **Smoked and cooked linked sausage** - 1 or 2-pound (454 g or 907 g) retail-type individual vacuum packages or bulk packed in 5-10 pound (2.3 kg to 4.5 kg) plastic lined containers. When specified by the purchaser, layers one link deep will be separated with waxed paper or sheets of plastic material used for this purpose.
- b. **Sliced bacon** - 1 or 2 pound (454 g or 907 g) retail-type individual packages, shingle or laid-out packed with layers separated by waxed paper or sheets of plastic material used for this purpose.

When specified by the purchaser, the paper separating the layers of layout packed bacon will be of a heat-resistant type, that will allow the purchaser to cook the product on a grill, or in an oven without removing the paper.

- c. **Sliced dried beef** - Either 1/4 pound, 1/2 pound, or 1 pound (113 g, 227 g, or 454 g) retail-type individual packages tightly packed to not more than 10 pounds (4.5 kg) net weight per container. Alternatively, the product may be packed in a plastic-lined container not to exceed 10 pounds (4.5 kg) net weight.
 - d. **Bulk pork or breakfast sausage** - 1 or 2 pound (454 g or 907 g) retail-type individual packages such as cello rolls or plastic bags packed not more than 10 pounds (4.5 kg) net weight per container or in a waxed or plastic-lined container not to exceed 10 pounds (4.5 kg) net weight.
 - e. **Fresh linked sausage** - 1 pound (454 g) retail-type individual packages or layer-packed one link deep with parchment, plastic or waxed paper separators between layers tightly packed to 5 to 10 pounds (2.3 kg to 4.5 kg) net weight.
9. The purchaser may specify products to be **vacuum packaged**. The purchaser

may specify any one or combination of the following vacuum packaging methods:

- a. **Bags** - The finished product is placed into a plastic bag. Air is evacuated from the bag and hermetically heat-sealed.
- b. **Thermoforming** - The finished product is packaged using two separate plastic films. Either the top or bottom plastic film is formed into the approximate shape of the finished product. The remaining plastic film is applied; air is evacuated and is hermetically heat-sealed.
- c. **Vacuum skin** - The finished product is passed between two rolls of plastic films, one or both may be heated. The films make tight contact with the meat. At the same time air is evacuated and is hermetically heat-sealed.

B. PACKING

Unless otherwise specified by the purchaser, shipping containers will be new, class domestic and packed to full capacity without slack filling or overfilling. Unless otherwise specified by the purchaser, containers will not be packed in excess of 90 pounds (40.8 kg) net weight. The minimum bursting strength or minimum edge crush strength of the fiberboard (as applicable on the box maker's certificate) and the maximum net weight of the container will comply with **TABLE I**. The bursting strength is measured using the "Mullen Test." The edge crush test (ECT) correlates to the top-to-bottom or vertical compression strength and is not applicable to solid fiberboard or weather-resistant containers.

Immediate containers used for packaging that meet the packing requirements may be used as shipping containers. Otherwise, immediate containers will be placed in a master container meeting the packing requirements except that part or whole shipments of not more than 5 packaged units may be shipped in their immediate containers.

Liver and cured product in pickle solution or brine may be vacuum-packaged and placed directly into fiberboard boxes or put in plastic bags and then packed into fiberboard boxes completely lined with appropriate moisture-proof plastic bags. Alternatively, liver and cured products may be packed into fiber or metal drums approved by FSIS, FSIS, as a suitable food container. Drum interiors will be lined with a plastic bag long enough to permit closure and will have full-opening tops with lock-rim closures that permit sealing, opening and reclosure.

The purchaser may specify weather-resistant containers. Fiberboard used in making these containers will be as described in Federal Specification ASTM D 4727/D4727M. When specified, Type CF and SF, class weather-resistant boxes will comply with **TABLE I** and will be imprinted with the following data:

- (1) Boxmaker's name or boxmaker's certificate.
- (2) Month and year of manufacture (e.g., 11/91).
- (3) Individual grade or identification symbols.
- (4) Minimum average bursting or puncture strength or ECT.

NOTE: The purchaser and/or AMS agent maintains the right to verify, using appropriate test procedures, that packing and packaging materials comply with these requirements.

| TABLE I. REQUIREMENTS FOR FIBERBOARD | | | |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Net Weight of Shipping Container | Minimum Bursting Strength or Puncture Test ^{1/} | Minimum Edge Crush Test (ECT) ^{1/} | Minimum Weather-Resistant Grade (identification symbols) |
| 40 pounds (18.1 kg) or less | 175 psi | 29 lb/in | W6s, W6c |
| 41 to 65 pounds (18.6-29.5 kg) | 200 psi | 32 lb/in | W5s, W5c |
| 66 to 79 pounds (29.9-35.8 kg) | 250 psi | 40 lb/in | V3s, V4s, V3c |
| 80 to 90 pounds (36.3-40.8 kg) | 275 psi | 44 lb/in | V3s, V4s, V3c |

1/ Corrugated fiberboard (Type CF) and solid fiberboard (Type SF) class domestic boxes will each bear a legible boxmaker's certificate signifying compliance with the Uniform Freight Classification Rules or National Motor Freight Classification Rules, as applicable. The AMS agent will use the boxmaker's certificate label to determine minimum bursting or puncture strength or ECT.

| TABLE II. REQUIRED NUMBER OF STRAPS | | |
|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Outside Length of Box | Number of Straps Lengthwise ^{1/3/} | Number of Straps Girthwise ^{2/} |
| less than 20" (50.8 cm) | 1 | 1 |
| 20" to 30" (50.8 cm-76.2 cm) | 1 | 2 |
| Over 30" (76.2 cm) | 1 | 3 |

1/ Two lengthwise straps will be placed over the outer flaps on all regular slotted containers, unless the option for taping (see closure section (2)) has been used and the tape qualifies as a seal.

2/ The girthwise straps on telescope containers that have been assembled using the side tuck lock method will be placed over the tuck lock areas. The girthwise straps on all other containers will be placed to divide the box into units of approximate equal length.

3/ Lengthwise straps (for closure) will not be necessary on boxes with a width of 9 inches (22.9 cm) or less.

C. CLOSURE

Fiberboard containers will be securely closed using one or a combination of the following methods:

1. **Strapping.** Boxes may be strapped with pressure-sensitive adhesive, filament-reinforced tape at least 0.5 inch (13 mm) wide or nonmetallic strapping at least 0.25 inch (6 mm) wide. The number of straps applied to each container will

comply with **TABLE II**. The color of the strapping material will provide a definite contrast to black.

2. **Taping.** Pressure-sensitive, transparent film tape or non-transparent, filament-reinforced tape, may be used for both the initial and final closure of regular slotted containers. The tape will be centered over the seams and extend uniformly onto both the adjacent box panels preventing the lifting of edges and corners of the outer flaps. If non-transparent, filament-reinforced tape is used, the placement of the tape will not interfere or obscure any required markings. The tape will not measure less than 2.0 inches (5.0 cm) in width. (If the width of the tape is measured after being applied to the box, the tape will not measure less than 1.8 inches (4.6 cm) wide). The net weight of the container closed using the taping method may not exceed 55.0 pounds (24.8 kg).
3. **Gluing.** The outer and inner flaps will be firmly glued together over a sufficient area to securely close and prevent lifting of edges and corners of the outer flaps. Hot melt adhesive may be used instead of glue.

NOTE: When telescope containers are used, the final closure will be in accordance with the above strapping method. When full overlap slotted containers are used, and the width of the flaps is 9.0 inches (22.9 cm) or less, both the initial and final closure will be secured in accordance with the above gluing method. Unless authorized by the purchaser, staples and/or metal stitching will not be permitted for assembly or closure of containers.

NOTE: If the tape or strap specified for "CLOSURE" also qualifies as a seal, it may be used for both closure and the seal.

D. MARKING OF SHIPPING CONTAINERS

Unless otherwise specified, shipping containers will be marked as follows:

1. Containers Packed to More Than 25 Pounds (11.4 kg) Net Weight
 - a. All marking materials will be flat, waterfast, non-smearing (take on fiber) and provide a definite contrast upon the surface of the container. The markings on the container will be legible and preprinted by the box manufacturer. Alternatively, markings may be mechanically printed labels or legibly stenciled in lettering and numbers not less than 3/8 inch (9 mm) high. When using mechanically printed labels, they will be pressure sensitive and applied to prevent their removal in an intact form. The use of felt-tip pen, crayon, pencil or other similar marking devices is prohibited except as provided herein.
 - b. The markings will be located in the following sequence on one end panel of the container:

- (1) **Upper left hand area.** The true name of the product, "**IMPS**" and the product item description number.
- (2) **Upper right hand area.** The date of initial certification (month, day, and year). Lot numbers and boxes number when product is designated by lot (the numerical entry of the lot or box may be applied with a felt-tip pen, crayon, or indelible pencil).
- (3) **Lower left hand area.** The applicable grade (U.S. Prime, U.S. Choice, etc.), and Purchase Order (P.O.) number. When product is prepared for stockpiling (not prepared under a purchase order), any deviations from specification requirements and all other applicable options such as weight range, formula, portion size, percent fat, fat thickness, etc. When product is prepared for stockpiling, the P.O. number will be entered at the time of final certification.
- (4) **Lower right hand area.** The item count and net weight of product in pounds and (unless otherwise specified) kilograms. (The numerical entry may be applied with a felt-tip pen, crayon, or indelible pencil.)

NOTE: Other markings (trademarks, logos, etc.), may be printed on the same end panel (unless otherwise specified), however, such markings will not interfere with the placement or legibility of the required markings.

- c. The name and address of the contractor and the supplier (if different) will be located on either the side or top of the container.
 - d. The following markings will be located on the top of the container:
 - (1) The name and address of the receiver or buyer (not applicable to stockpile items.)
 - (2) For freezer stockpile items the marking will read "FREEZER STOCKPILE." (Product initially certified according to a contract or purchase order will not bear this marking.)
 - (3) For chilled stockpile items the marking will read "CHILLED STOCKPILE." (Product certified according to a contract or purchase order will not bear this marking.)
 - (4) Special handling or temperature instructions.
 - (5) When specified by the purchaser, commercial or Child Nutrition labeling may be required.
2. Containers Packed to 25 Pounds (11.4 kg) or Less Net Weight.

For such containers, the size of the lettering and numbers is not specified; however, they will legibly bear the markings as indicated above. The use of felt-tip pen, crayon, pencil or other similar marking devices is prohibited except as provided

herein.

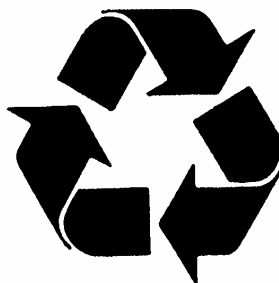
3. Containers with incorrect markings may be corrected and used provided they do not require extensive changes. These changes will be made by obliterating the incorrect markings with paint similar in color to the box. Correct markings will be applied in the same location as the obliterated markings. If applicable, corrections will be partially imprinted with the applicable USDA, MGCB stamp. Alternatively, pressure-sensitive labels may be used to correct markings. These labels may be applied to each change or to the entire display panel. If applied to each change, then the labels will be partially imprinted with the applicable USDA stamp. Other methods of changing markings such as taping over, cutting out, or modifying with a marker are not permitted.

E. PALLETIZED UNIT LOADS

- X When specified in the purchase order or contract, shipping containers will be unitized and delivered on new or well-maintained pallets.
- X Pallets will be 48 inches (122 cm) long by 40 inches (102 cm) wide, stringer or block design, partial or full four-way entry, flush or non-flush, nonreversible, and suitable for shipping approximately 2000 pounds (908 Kg) of food product.
- X Pallet loads will be made by stacking shipping containers in layers (tiers) so that: 1) overhang of the shipping containers over the edges of the pallets is minimized; 2) no incomplete tiers are present; and 3) the shipping container principal display panels are exposed to facilitate certification examinations.
- X The shipping containers will be held firmly in place by applying plastic stretch-wrap as tightly as possible around all tiers of the palletized shipping containers.
- X Each pallet shall be examined at the time of shipping to assure that the shipping containers are held firmly in place, and that the appropriate pallets were used. If palletized unit loads are found to be in noncompliance the observed units shall be corrected.

F. RECYCLING

The USDA encourages industry to support conservation. Corrugated box manufacturers products have long been one of the major sources of recycled paper and paperboard. About 40 percent of all the corrugated board produced, including 100 percent of the waste generated in the box plants themselves, finds its way back into new production. Ask your box maker what you can do to help conserve our nation's resources. Or write to the American Paper Institute, 260 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, for more information on recycling and recycled materials.



III. USDA CERTIFICATION

The local MGCB Supervisor shall determine and implement the degree of supervision necessary to assure specification compliance. Examination and certification of any IMPS item shall be in accordance with the IMPS Quality Assurance Provisions (QAPs), other applicable documents and with Livestock and Seed Division, MGCB policies and procedures.

When USDA, MGCB certification is requested, the contract or purchase order shall be made available to the AMS agent prior to final certification. Examination and certification of product by the USDA, MGCB, shall not relieve contractors of their responsibility to deliver a product that complies with all contractual and specification requirements. Producers shall establish such quality control measures as may be necessary to assure product compliance prior to submitting it to the AMS agent for examination.

Contractors furnishing products under these specifications shall provide as much assistance as may be necessary to expedite the grading, examination, and certification of these products. The cost of all grading and certification services performed by the AMS agent involving examinations, supervision, official documentation, and related services (including samples and charges for chemical analyses, travel time, mileage, and per diem, when applicable) shall be borne by the contractor.

For more information regarding USDA, AMS Certification services write or contact:

USDA, MRP, AMS, Livestock and Seed Program
Meat Grading and Certification Branch
Stop 0248, Room 2628 S-Bldg
1400 Independence Ave. SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-0248 Phone: (202) 720-1113 FAX: (202) 690-4119

Internet Address: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/lsg/lsg.htm>

A. CERTIFICATION OF MEAT HANDLING REQUIREMENTS

1. **State of refrigeration.** Unless the contractor is an approved participant in the MGCB-sponsored Quality Control Program (see Quality Assurance Provisions, Exhibit A), all product to be delivered frozen shall be examined initially in the fresh chilled state. Contractors shall assure product is placed into a freezer capable of maintaining an ambient temperature of 0°F (-17.8°C) or lower.
2. **Product to be delivered frozen - Same day processing.** Evidence required to prove date of slaughter and the amount of product control necessary in such cases shall be

determined locally.

3. **Time limitations.** For certification, of both the 4 hour placement into the freezer and the temperature within 72 hours referred to in Freezing Options 1 or 2 shall be after completion of the applicable end item examination (stationary lot, net weight, item count, and/or condition of container) for the finished product to be placed into the freezer. The 72 hours include the 4 hour requirement.
4. **Metal detection.** When specified by the purchaser, the AMS agent in accordance with MGCB instructions and policy shall test the equipment used for the metal detection.

B. PURCHASER SPECIFIED EXAMINATIONS

1. **Examination for Condition of Containers.** When specified by the purchaser, examinations of containers shall be in accordance with the United States Standards for Condition of Food Containers. The AMS agent on each production lot shall perform the examination for primary and shipping container requirements at the time of production prior to being placed in the freezer. In addition, an examination for condition of shipping containers shall be performed on the delivery unit at the time product is offered for final certification. This examination is limited to defects that may have occurred during handling and storage (e.g., crushed, torn, dirty, stained, etc.) The applicable AMS Visual Aids for Inspection of Containers shall be used by the AMS agent as a reference when determining the severity of container defects.

For production lots of less than 50 shipping containers or less than 300 primary containers, the containers shall be examined individually and all defective containers must be replaced or corrected, as applicable.

2. **Net Weight Examination.** When specified by the purchaser, packed product shall be certified for net weight. The examination procedures shall be as described in the IMPS QAPs.
3. **Item Count Examination.** When specified by the purchaser, packed product shall be certified for number of specified items (roasts, cuts, packaged units, or portion cuts) per container. The examination procedures shall be as described in the IMPS QAPs.

C. SEALING

When USDA, MGCB certification is requested, the immediate container or shipping container in that the products are packed shall be sealed in accordance with MGCB Instructions.

D. DESTINATION INSPECTION

For USDA, MGCB-certified product - Consignee shall reject: (1) products that are not identified with the appropriate "USDA Accepted as Specified" stamp, or (2) products that are appropriately identified with that stamp but that have other obvious, major deviations from the

specification requirements.

Products certified by USDA, MGCB, but that, in the opinion of the consignee, have deviations from the specification requirements that do not materially affect the usability of the product, may be tentatively accepted subject to verification of such deviations by the local USDA, MGCB office. All deviations from the specification noted at the point of delivery shall be reported promptly to local USDA, MGCB personnel who will investigate all such reports without delay.

E. ISSUANCE OF CERTIFICATES

The original and up to one extra copy of all final certificates shall be made available to the contractor. The contractor shall supply the purchaser with a legible carbon copy of all final certificates.

NOTE: Should the purchaser and/or applicant require additional copies of USDA, AMS certificates, mechanically reproduced copies may be furnished, provided each additional copy is stamped with an original imprint of the USDA Shield stamp and signed by the AMS agent.

Preliminary and final certificates will be issued as described:

- 1. Products to be Delivered Chilled.** The AMS agent will issue a final certificate upon completion of a finished product examination to cover all factors and details of the chilled product.
- 2. Products to be Delivered Frozen.** The AMS agent will issue a final certificate to cover all factors and details of the frozen product prior to shipment.
- 3. Product to be Delivered Frozen when Final Certification is performed in the Chilled State.** The AMS agent will issue a final certificate upon completion of a finished product examination to cover all factors and details of the product prior to freezing. It will be the contractor's responsibility to assure the product is delivered frozen.

F. WAIVERS AND AMENDMENTS TO SPECIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

In the interest of competitive bidding, the issuance of waivers by the purchaser is strongly discouraged. However, waivers of a few specification requirements may be authorized provided: (1) the change can be indicated clearly and can be readily applied, (2) there is an agreement between the purchaser and contractor on the change, (3) the purchaser furnishes the AMS agent who is to perform the examination and certification of the product with a written statement indicating the precise nature of the changes, and (4) such changes comply with all FSIS regulations.

Examples of waivers that may be made:

1. Substitution of weight ranges for those specified
2. Substitution of grade of meat for that specified
3. Modification of fats content in ground or diced meat
4. Substitution or slight variations in sausage formulas
5. Modification of container requirements

Waivers of contract requirements will be effective only after the changes have been submitted and approved by the purchaser or their agent.

Changes involving rephrasing of detailed specification requirements shall be considered as an amendment to the specification and will be effective only after such changes have been submitted and approved by the Standardization Branch, USDA, MRP, AMS, Livestock and Seed Program, Stop 0254, Rm. 2628 S-Bldg, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-0254.

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