

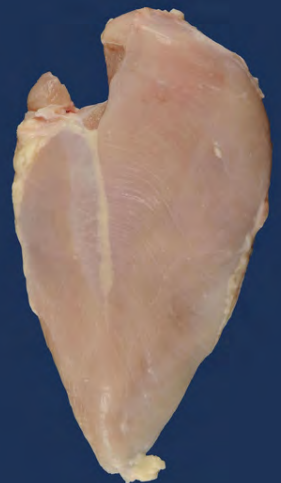


Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Poultry Picture Series

A Guide to U.S. Graded Chicken 2022, 1st Edition

United States Department of Agriculture / Agricultural Marketing Service
Livestock and Poultry Program / Standards and Specifications Division





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Poultry Grading Picture Series

The Poultry Grading Picture Series illustrates various defects described in the official U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for Poultry. The illustrations selected are to assist USDA poultry commodity graders, industry, academia, and food buyers. All photos and defect criteria referenced in this picture series apply to chickens within the 2-6 pound size range. Refer to the official U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for Poultry for tolerances of other carcass weights.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has developed official grade standards for poultry carcasses, which measure such factors as meat yield, fat covering, freedom from defects such as cuts and tears in the skin, feathers, broken/disjointed bones, discolorations, and ready-to-cook (RTC) factors. The standards are applied to determine the quality of the product, and are not a reflection of wholesomeness, which is determined by the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) prior to the grading process.

Poultry grading service is provided in accordance with the official U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for Poultry which are available at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/grades-standards/poultry-and-poultry-products-grades-and-standards>

AMS also maintains the Poultry Grading Manual, which is a guide to the uniform application of the U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for poultry and can be found at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/publications/content/poultry-grading-manual>

USDA graders also utilize AMS' Quality Assessment Division (QAD) policies and procedures for grading known as the 500 series. The 500 series further defines certain information from the U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for Poultry and can be found at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/resources/qad-procedures-grading>

Poultry producers, packers, wholesalers, food manufacturers, food service operators, food retailers, and consumers rely on USDA's poultry grading services to ensure that their requirements are met for class, quality, condition, and other factors. The grading program offers several advantages, for example, independent third-party opinion on product quality based on the U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for Poultry, which assures the buyer the quality meets or exceeds those standards. Additionally, the grade shield assures the consumer or end user they are purchasing top quality poultry and poultry products.

A digital edition of the Poultry Picture Series and further information about poultry grading is available at: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/grades-standards/poultry>

Printed copies of the Poultry Picture Series and other poultry grading resources may be requested by sending an email to: AMSPoultryResources@usda.gov

Acknowledgements

This publication would not have been possible without the dedicated assistance and support of numerous USDA poultry commodity graders, supervisors, and the various poultry companies providing product samples for these pictures and the onsite photography sessions.

We express a special thank you to the USDA Photography Services and the Agricultural Research Service in Athens, GA, for their exceptional quality of images taken for this publication.

AMS truly benefits from the working relationship with all our industry and USDA partners. It is our hope that this publication will be a working resource for AMS, industry, academia, and food buyers alike to ensure quality poultry.

Poultry Grading

Grading is classifying and sorting poultry according to various groups of conditions and quality characteristics. Ready-to-cook poultry carcasses and parts, and certain poultry products, may be graded for quality according to official standards and grades.

The development of grade standards and the identification and certification of class, quality, quantity, and condition of agricultural products is authorized by the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946 (AMA) as amended (7 U.S.C. 1621 et seq). Regulations to implement the AMA were developed in cooperation with State agriculture officials, producers, processors, and consumers.

The kinds of poultry eligible for grading and certification include, but are not limited to, chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, pigeons, and guineas. The form may be as a ready-to-cook carcass, part, or as a further processed product which include roasts, size reduced poultry and cooked products eligible to receive the Prepared From Grade A shield.

All poultry that is graded must first be inspected. Inspection refers to the wholesomeness of poultry and its fitness for food, but is not concerned with quality or grade. The inspection mark means that the poultry has passed examination by a qualified USDA veterinarian or inspector during slaughter and/or processing. All slaughter plants are supervised by a USDA veterinarian.

Quality

Quality is defined as the inherent properties of any product that determines its relative degree of excellence or value. The conditions and characteristics that a customer or consumer wants and is willing to pay for can be considered in a broad sense “Quality Factors.”

The AMS Livestock & Poultry (L&P) Program administers a nationwide poultry grading program to determine compliance for quality according to the official U.S. Standards. Grading services are rendered by USDA on a voluntary fee-for-service basis. L&P Program representatives (USDA Graders) supervise the grading, packaging, and packing of the poultry product to ensure that it meets applicable quality standards. In order for the poultry to be eligible to bear the official identification, the poultry must be graded by a plant employed authorized grader, and then checkgraded and certified by the USDA Grader. Officially graded poultry which passes this examination and evaluation process is eligible for official grade identification.

Advantages of Poultry Grading

- Independent third-party opinion on product quality based on U.S. Standards
- Assures the buyer of product quality
- Basis for fair bidding between suppliers
- Offers the certification to aid poultry marketing in domestic and foreign markets
- Certifies that product meets the requirements of USDA Approved Commercial Specifications or USDA Federal Purchase Program Specifications

Standards for Poultry

USDA Grade A whole carcasses and parts:

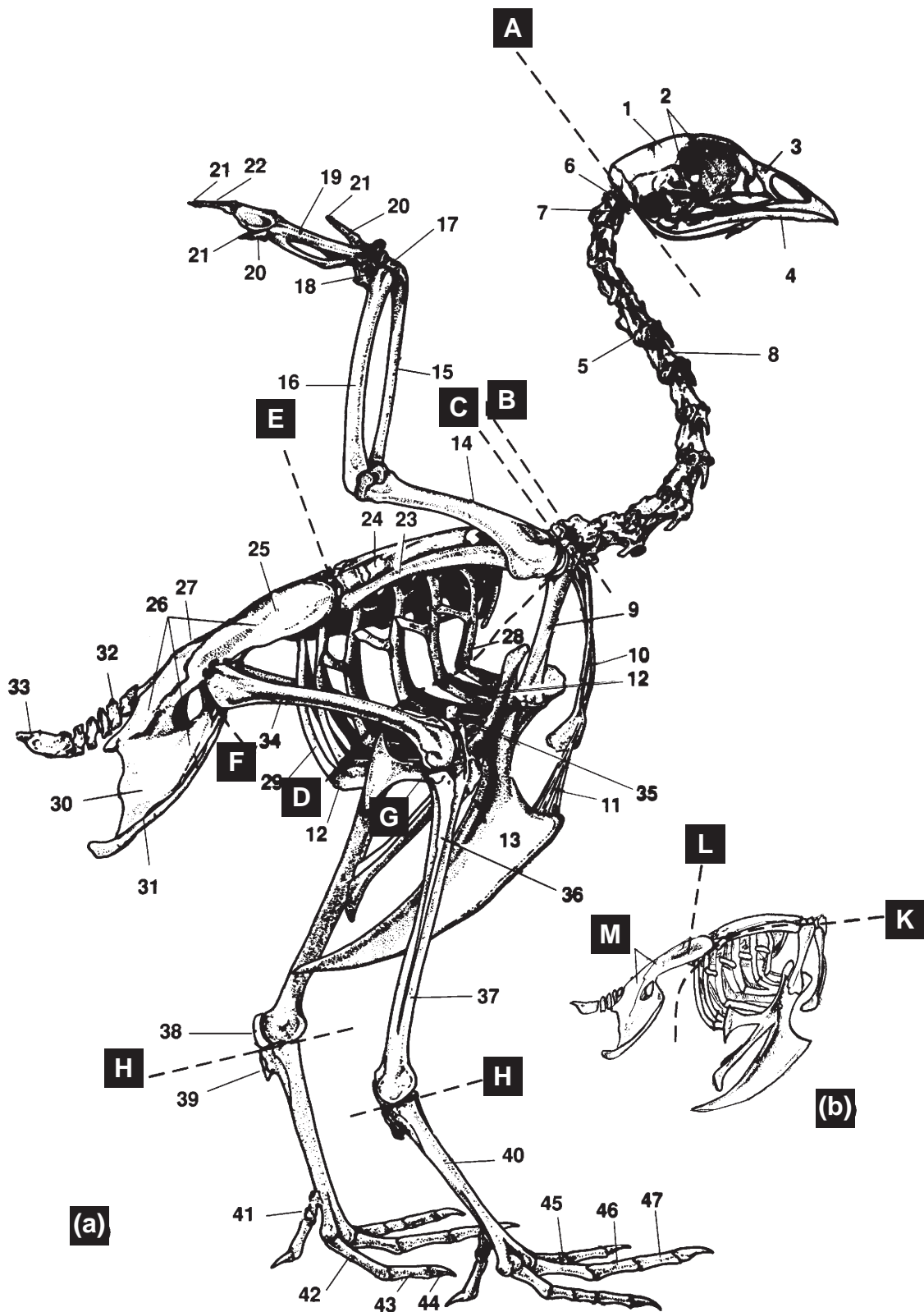
- Are fully fleshed and meaty
- Have normal conformation and shape
- Are free of disjointed or broken bones*
- Are free of feathers*
- Are free of exposed flesh and discolorations*

USDA Grade A boneless-skinless poultry products:

- Are free of bone, skin, cartilage, tendons, bruises, blood clots, and other discolorations*
- Are free of cuts, tears, and holes in the muscle tissue, and excess trimming around the outer edges of the product*

*Within tolerances stated in the U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for Poultry (see page 12)

Chicken Skeletal Diagram



Skeleton of a chicken. (Negative No. 89BW0137)

Figure (a). Whole chicken skeleton

Bones are identified with the numbers listed below.

Head	Wing	Tail
1 Vertebral cranium (lateral parietal crest)	14 Humerus	32 Coccygeal vertebrae
2 Orbital fossa	15 Radius	33 Urostyle - Pygostyle
3 Visceral cranium (lateral ramus of nasal bone)	16 Ulna	Leg
4 Mandibula (mandible, lower jaw)	17 Radial carpal	34 Femur
Neck	18 Ulnar carpal	35 Patella - Knee cap
5 Region of the ligamentum nuchae (main ligament of the neck)	19 Third carpometacarpal	36 Fibula
6 Atlas - First cervical	20 First phalanges	37 Tibia
7 Axis - Second cervical	21 Distal phalanges	38 Hypotarsal sesamoid
8 Cervical vertebrae	22 Second phalanx, third digit	Foot
Breast	Back	39 Hypotarsal ridge
9 Coracoid	23 Scapula	40 Tarsometatarsus (second, third, and fourth)
10 Clavicle - Wishbone	24 Thoracic vertebrae	41 First metatarsal
11 Hypocleidial ligament	25 Ilium	42 First phalanx, second digit
12 Sternal rib portion	26 Os innominatum	43 Second phalanx, second digit
13 Sternum - Keelbone	27 Synsacrum	44 Distal phalanx, second digit
	28 Second rib	45 First phalanx, third digit
	29 Vertebral rib portion	46 Second phalanx, third digit
	30 Ischium	47 Third phalanx, third digit
	31 Pubium - Pinbone	

Points where parts are cut in accordance with USDA regulations are identified with the letters listed below.

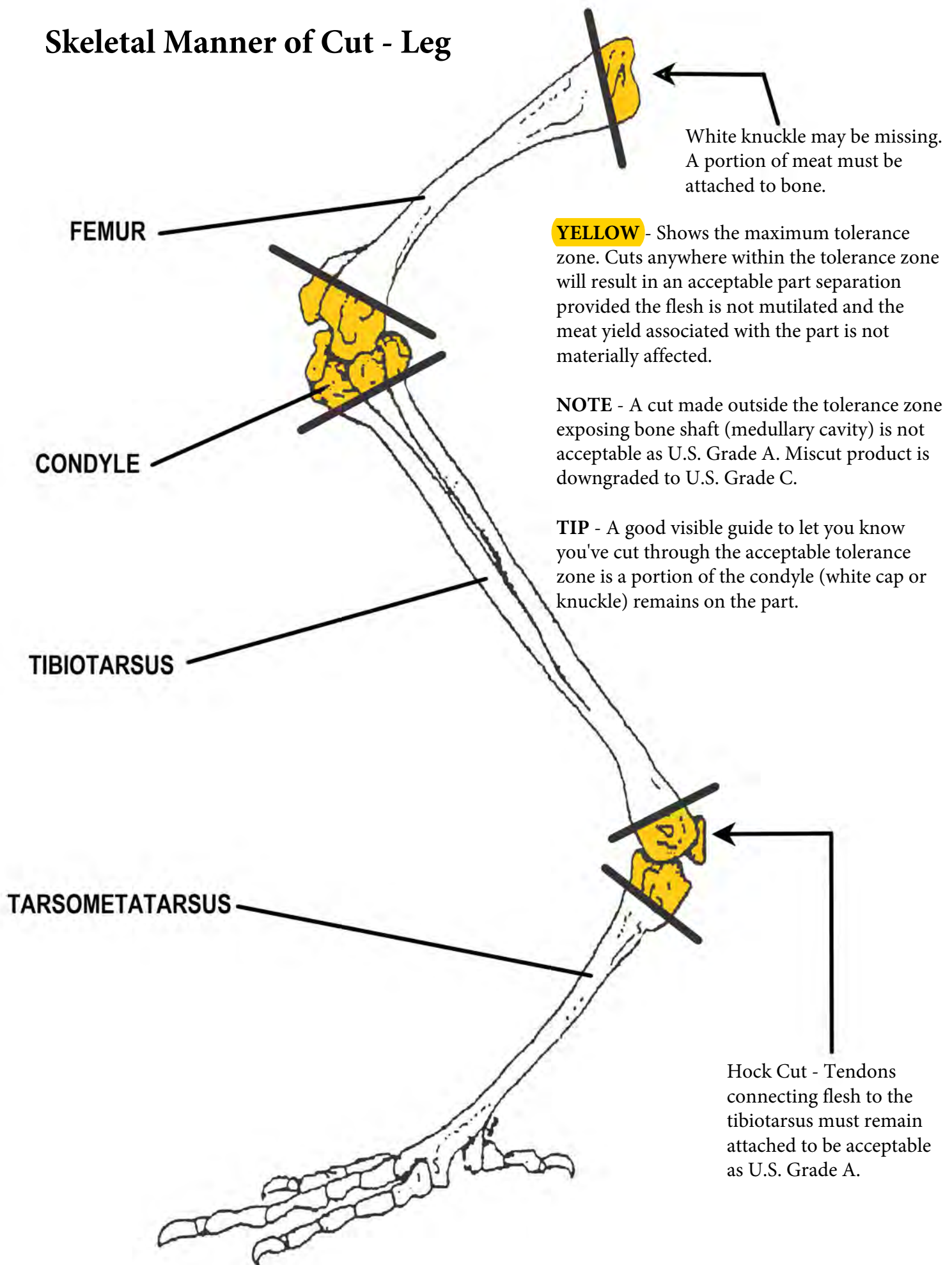
- A - Head from neck
- B - Neck from breast/back
- C - Wing from breast
- D - Breast from back
- E - Front half of back from back half of back
- F - Leg from back
- G - Thigh from drumstick
- H - Drumstick from foot

Figure (b). Breast and back of chicken skeleton.

Rib and pelvic meat areas, and point to cut breast with ribs, are identified with the letters listed below.

- K - Breast with rib cut
- L - Oyster meat area
- M - Pelvic meat area

Skeletal Manner of Cut - Leg

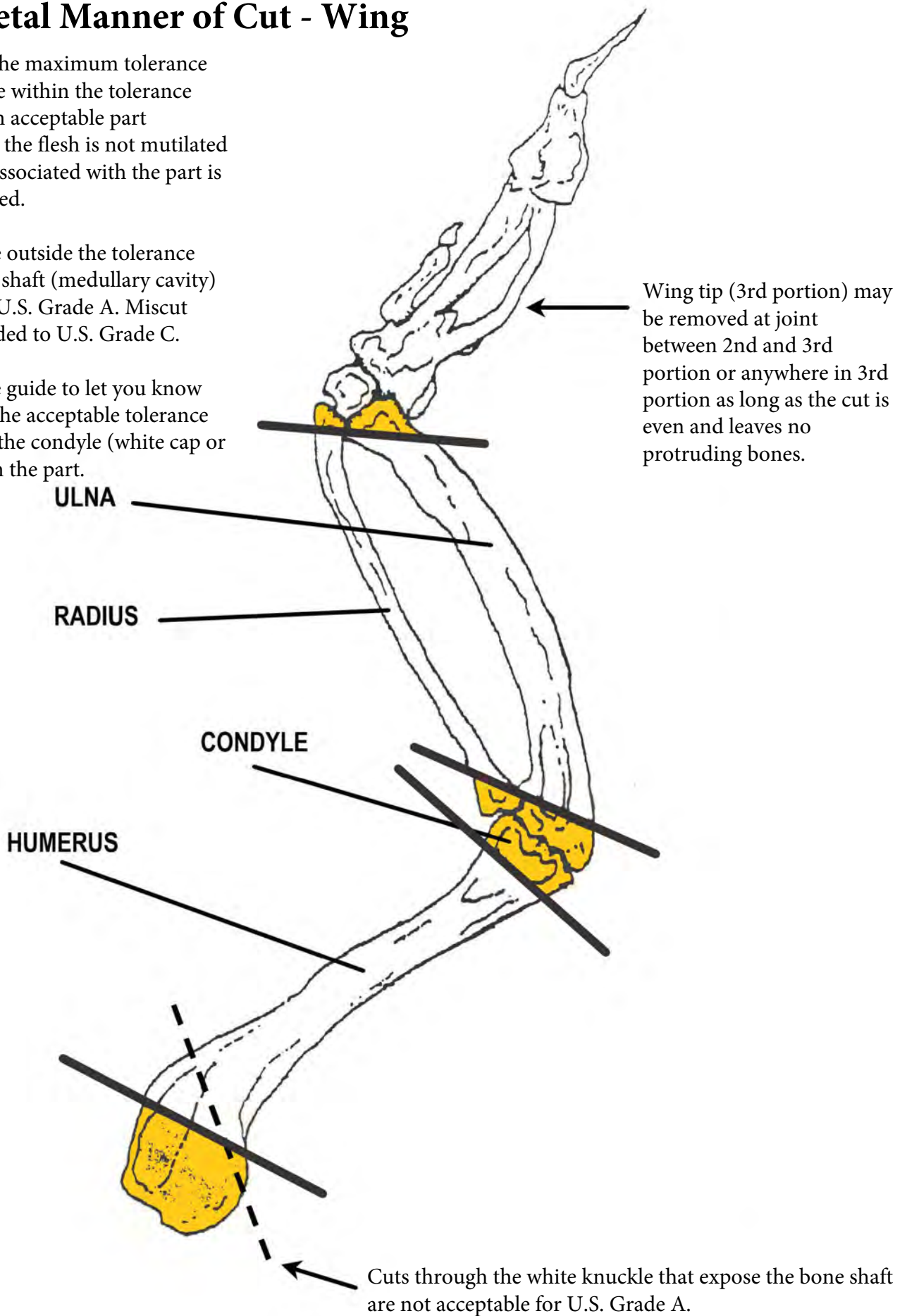


Skeletal Manner of Cut - Wing

YELLOW - Shows the maximum tolerance zone. Cuts anywhere within the tolerance zone will result in an acceptable part separation provided the flesh is not mutilated and the meat yield associated with the part is not materially affected.

NOTE - A cut made outside the tolerance zone exposing bone shaft (medullary cavity) is not acceptable as U.S. Grade A. Miscut product is downgraded to U.S. Grade C.

TIP - A good visible guide to let you know you've cut through the acceptable tolerance zone is a portion of the condyle (white cap or knuckle) remains on the part.



Discoloration Reference



Slight discolorations are areas of discoloration that are *generally pinkish* in color and do not detract from the appearance of the carcass or part.



Light discolorations are *generally reddish* in color and are usually confined to areas of the skin or the surface of the flesh.



Moderate discolorations are areas that are *generally dark red or bluish*, or are areas of flesh bruising.

Areas of discoloration are limited to an aggregate area equivalent to the area of a circle of the diameter specified on the U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for Poultry Summary Sheets for each grade A, B, and C.

Ready-to-Cook Poultry - A Quality

Summary of Specifications for Standards of Quality for Individual Carcasses and Parts

Effective April 29, 1998 (Not All Inclusive -- Minimum Requirements and Maximum Defects Permitted)

A Quality							
Conformation:		Normal					
Breastbone		Slight curve or dent					
Back		Slight curve					
Legs and Wings		Normal					
Fleshing:		Well fleshed, considering kind and class					
Fat Covering:		Well developed layer -- especially between heavy feathers tracts					
Defeathering: Free of protruding feathers and hairs		Turkeys (feathers less than 3/4 in.)		Ducks and Geese ¹ (feathers less than 1/2 in.)		All Other Poultry (feathers less than 1/2 in.)	
		Carcass	Parts	Carcass	Parts	Carcass	Parts
		4	2	8	4	4	2
Exposed Flesh: ² Weight Range		Carcass		Large Carcass Parts ³ (halves, front and rear halves)		Other Parts ³	
		Breast and Legs	Elsewhere	Breast and Legs	Elsewhere		
Minimum	Maximum						
None	2 lbs.	1/4 in.	1 in.	1/4 in.	1/2 in.	1/4 in.	
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.	1/4 in.	1 1/2 in.	1/4 in.	3/4 in.	1/4 in.	
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.	1/2 in.	2 in.	1/2 in.	1 in.	1/2 in.	
Over 16 lbs.	None	1/2 in.	3 in.	1/2 in.	1 1/2 in.	1/2 in.	
Discolorations:		Lightly Shaded			Moderately Shaded ⁴		
		Carcass		Breast and Legs	Elsewhere	Hock of leg	Elsewhere
None	2 lbs.	3/4 in.	1 1/4 in.		1/4 in.	5/8 in.	
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.	1 in.	2 in.		1/2 in.	1 in.	
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.	1 1/2 in.	2 1/2 in.		3/4 in.	1 1/4 in.	
Over 16 lbs.	None	2 in.	3 in.		1 in.	1 1/2 in.	
Discolorations:		Lightly Shaded			Moderately Shaded ⁴		
		Large Carcass Parts (halves, front and rear halves)		Breast and Legs	Elsewhere	Hock of leg	Elsewhere
None	2 lbs.	1/2 in.	1 in.		1/4 in.	1/2 in.	
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.	3/4 in.	1 1/2 in.		3/8 in.	3/4 in.	
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.	1 in.	2 in.		1/2 in.	1 in.	
Over 16 lbs.	None	1 1/4 in.	2 1/2 in.		5/8 in.	1 1/4 in.	
Discolorations:		Lightly Shaded			Moderately Shaded ⁴		
		Other Parts					
None	2 lbs.	1/2 in.			1/4 in.		
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.	3/4 in.			3/8 in.		
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.	1 in.			1/2 in.		
Over 16 lbs.	None	1 1/4 in.			5/8 in.		
Disjointed and Broken Bones:		Carcass--1 disjointed and no broken bones. Parts--Thighs with back portion, legs, or leg quarters may have femur disjointed from the hip joint. Other parts--none.					
Missing Parts:		Wing tips and tail. In ducks and geese, the parts of the wing beyond the second joint may be removed if removed at the joint and both wings are so treated. Tail may be removed at the base.					
Freezing Defects:		Slight darkening on back and drumstick. Overall bright appearance. Occasional pock-marks due to drying. Occasional small areas of clear, pinkish, or reddish-colored ice.					

¹ Hair or down is permitted on the carcass or part, provided the hair or down is less than 3/16 inch in length, and is scattered so that the carcass or part has a clean appearance, especially on the breast and legs.

² Maximum aggregate area of all exposed flesh. In addition, the carcass or part may have cuts or tears that do not expand or significantly expose flesh, provided the aggregate length of all such cuts and tears does not exceed a length tolerance equal to the permitted dimensions listed above.

³ For all parts, trimming of skin along the edge is allowed, provided at least 75 percent of the normal skin cover associated with the part remains attached, and the remaining skin uniformly covers the outer surface and does not detract from the appearance of the part.

⁴ Moderately shaded discolorations and discolorations due to flesh bruising are free of clots and limited to areas other than the breast and legs except for the area adjacent to the hock.

Ready-to-Cook Poultry - B Quality

Summary of Specifications for Standards of Quality for Individual Carcasses and Parts

Effective April 29, 1998 (Not All Inclusive --Minimum Requirements and Maximum Defects Permitted)

		B Quality					
Conformation:		Moderate deformities					
Breastbone		Moderately dented, curved, or crooked					
Back		Moderately crooked					
Legs and Wings		Moderately misshapen					
Fleshing:		Moderately fleshed, considering kind and class					
Fat Covering:		Sufficient fat layer--especially on breast and legs					
Defeathering:		Turkeys (feathers less than 3/4 in.)		Ducks and Geese ¹ (feathers less than 1/2 in.)		All Other Poultry (feathers less than 1/2 in.)	
A few scattered protruding feathers and hairs		Carcass	Parts	Carcass	Parts	Carcass	Parts
		6	3	10	5	6	3
Exposed Flesh:		Carcass			Parts		
Weight Range Minimum: Maximum:							
None	2 lbs.	No part on the carcass (wings, legs, entire back, or entire breast) has more than 1/3 of the flesh exposed			No more than 1/3 of the flesh normally covered by skin exposed		
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.						
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.						
Over 16 lbs.	None						
Discolorations: ²		Carcass Lightly or Moderately Shaded Discolorations					
Carcass		Breast and Legs			Elsewhere		
None	2 lbs.	1 1/4 in.			2 1/4 in.		
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.	2 in.			3 in.		
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.	2 1/2 in.			4 in.		
Over 16 lbs.	None	3 in.			5 in.		
Discolorations: ²		Large Carcass Parts Lightly or Moderately Shaded Discolorations					
Large Carcass Parts (halves, front and rear halves)		Breast and Legs			Elsewhere		
None	2 lbs.	1 in.			1 1/4 in.		
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.	1 1/2 in.			1 3/4 in.		
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.	2 in.			2 1/2 in.		
Over 16 lbs.	None	2 1/2 in.			3 in.		
Discolorations: ²		Other Parts Lightly or Moderately Shaded Discolorations					
Other Parts		Breasts, Legs, and Parts					
None	2 lbs.	3/4 in.					
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.	1 in.					
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.	1 1/2 in.					
Over 16 lbs.	None	1 3/4 in.					
Disjointed and Broken Bones:		Carcass--2 disjointed and no broken bones, or 1 disjointed and 1 non-protruding broken bone. Parts--may be disjointed, no broken bones; wing beyond second joint may be removed at a joint.					
Missing Parts:		Wing tips, 2nd wing joint, and tail.					
Trimming:		Carcass			Parts		
		Slight trimming of the carcass is permitted provided the meat yield of any part on the carcass is not appreciably affected. The back may be trimmed in an area not wider than the base of the tail to the area halfway between the base of the tail and the hip joints.			A moderate amount of meat may be trimmed around the edge of a part to remove defects.		
Freezing Defects:		May lack brightness. Few pockmarks due to drying. Moderate areas showing a layer of clear, pinkish, or reddish colored ice.					

¹ Hair or down is permitted on the carcass or part, provided the hair or down is less than 3/16 inch in length, and is scattered so that the carcass or part has a clean appearance, especially on the breast and legs.

² Discolorations due to flesh bruising shall be free of clots and may not exceed one-half the total aggregate area of permitted discoloration.

Ready-to-Cook Poultry - C Quality

Summary of Specifications for Standards of Quality for Individual Carcasses and Parts

Effective April 29, 1998 (Not All Inclusive) (Minimum Requirements and Maximum Defects Permitted)

		C Quality					
Conformation:		Abnormal Seriously curved or cooked Seriously crooked Misshapen					
Breastbone							
Back							
Legs and Wings							
Fleshing:		Poorly fleshed					
Fat Covering:		Lacking in fat covering over all parts of carcass					
Defeathering:		Turkeys		Ducks and Geese ¹		All Other Poultry	
Scattering of protruding feathers and hairs		(feathers less than 3/4 in.)		(feathers less than 1/2 in.)		(feathers less than 1/2 in.)	
		Carcass	Parts	Carcass	Parts	Carcass	Parts
		8	4	12	6	8	4
Exposed Flesh:		Carcass			Parts		
Weight Range		No limit					
Maximum	Minimum						
None	2 lbs.						
Over 2 lbs.	6 lbs.						
Over 6 lbs.	16 lbs.						
Over 16 lbs.	None						
Discolorations:		Carcass					
Carcass		Breast and Legs			Elsewhere		
None		2 lbs.					
Over 2 lbs.		6 lbs.					
Over 6 lbs.		16 lbs.					
Over 16 lbs.		None					
Discolorations:		Parts					
(includes large carcass parts)		Breasts, Legs, and Parts					
None		2 lbs.					
Over 2 lbs.		6 lbs.					
Over 6 lbs.		16 lbs.					
Over 16 lbs.		None					
Disjointed and Broken Bones:		No limit					
Missing Parts:		Wing tips, wings, and tails.					
		Backs shall include all meat and skin from pelvic bones, except that the meat contained in the ilium (oyster) may be removed.					
		The vertebral ribs and scapula with meat and skin and the backbone located anterior (forward) of ilia bones may also be removed (front half of back).					
Trimming:		Carcass			Parts		
		Trimming of the breast and legs is permitted, but not to the extent that the normal meat yield is materially affected.					
		The back may be trimmed in an area not wider than the base of the tail and extending from the tail to the area between the hip joints.					
Freezing Defects:		Numerous pockmarks and large dried areas.					
¹ Hair or down is permitted on the carcass or part, provided the hair or down is less than 3/16 inch in length, and is scattered so that the carcass or part has a clean appearance, especially on the breast and legs.							

Poultry Grading and Inspection

What's the Difference?



U.S. Graded Poultry

- # Grading refers to the sorting of poultry by quality factors that determine its relative degree of excellence.
- # Product is continuously monitored by USDA graders and assigned a grade based on the following quality factors:

Exposed flesh, defeathering, discolorations, broken bones, missing parts, freezing defects, conformation or shape, fleshing, and fat covering.
- # Grading is a voluntary service paid for by poultry processors. Not all poultry is USDA graded.



U.S. Inspected Poultry

- # Inspection refers to the safety of poultry and poultry products and the accuracy of their labels.
- # Both the products and the plants' systems for sanitation and preparation of products are inspected to assure that they are safe.
- # Inspection involves only those properties related to wholesomeness and labeling, not quality.
- # Inspection is mandatory and required by law, with minor exceptions.

Quality is the Difference!



United States Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Marketing Service
Livestock & Poultry Program

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Agricultural Marketing Service
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Whole Bird



Whole Bird—Grade A



**Grade A Whole Bird
(Front)**



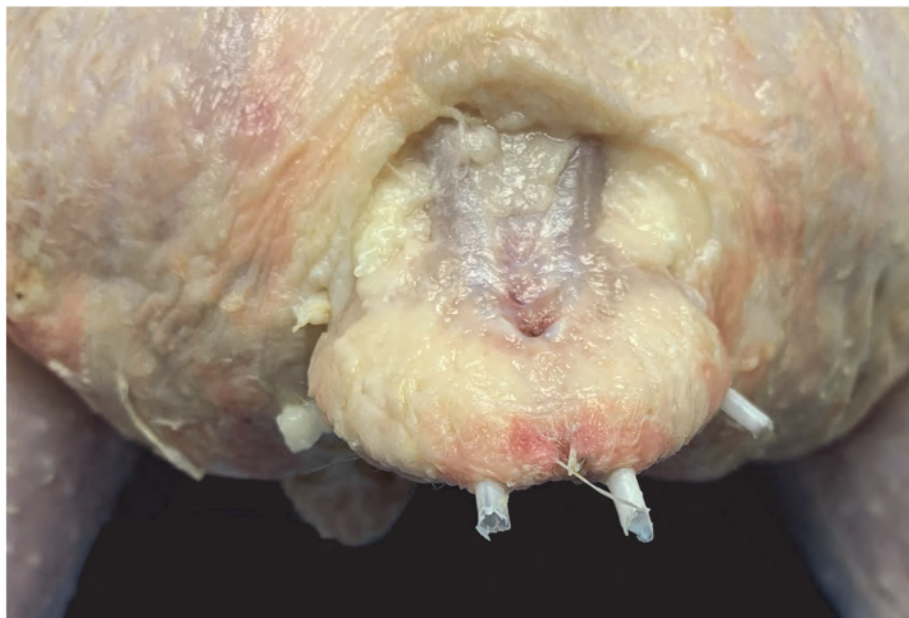
**Grade A Whole Bird
(Back)**

Whole Bird—Feathers



Grade A Whole Bird with Borderline Feathers Under the Tail

There is a tolerance for a small amount of encrustations and feathers in this area provided it does not detract from the overall appearance.



Grade A Whole Bird with Feather Shafts

Tolerance for feathers less than ½ inch:

Grade A: 4 feathers

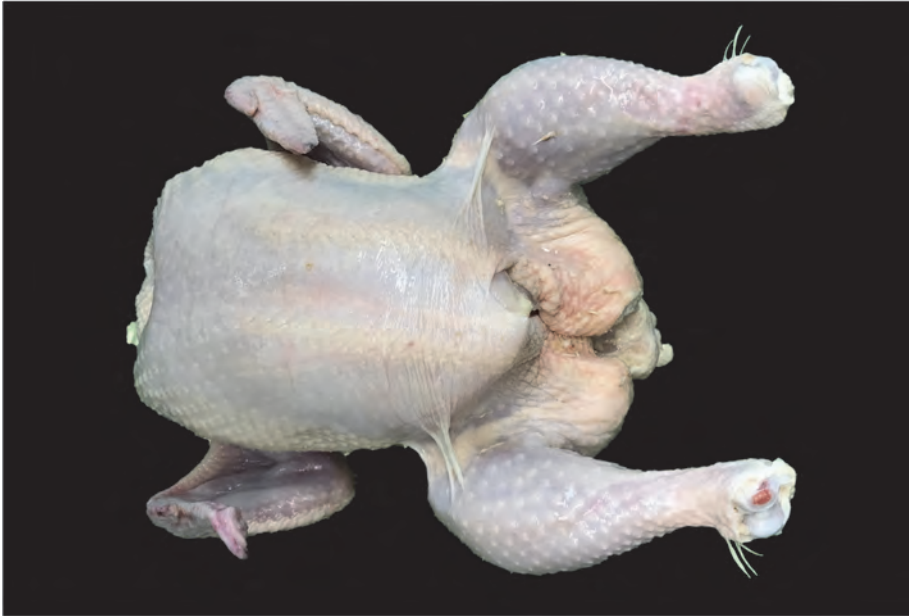
Grade B: 6 feathers

Grade C: 8 feathers

No Grade: more than 8 feathers

Note: Feather shafts are considered feathers

Whole Bird— Feathers



Grade B Whole Bird with 6 Feathers

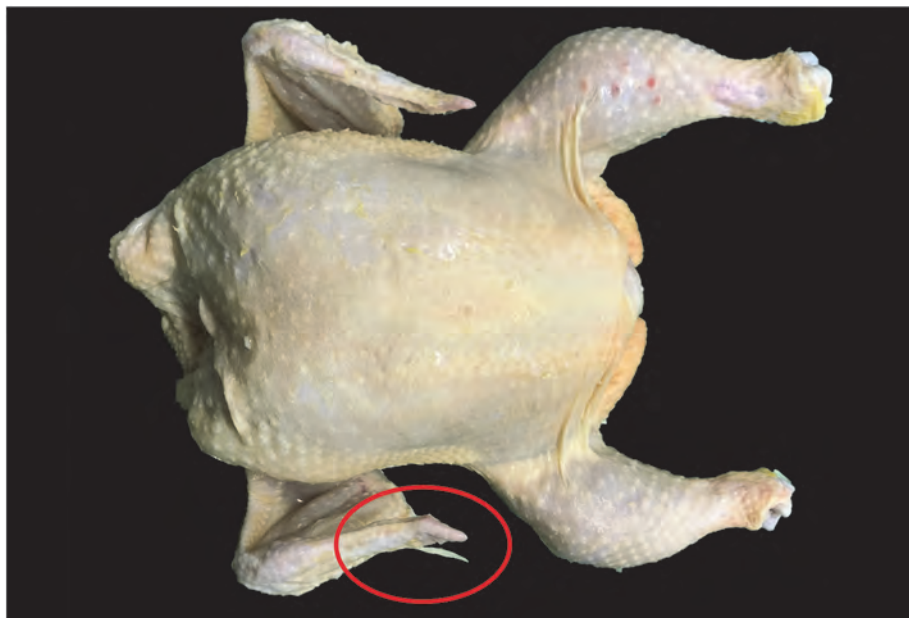
Tolerance for feathers less than ½ inch:

Grade A: 4 feathers

Grade B: 6 feathers

Grade C: 8 feathers

No Grade: more than 8 feathers



No Grade Whole Bird with Feather Longer than ½ inch

Parts or carcasses with attached feather(s) exceeding ½ inch in length are considered No Grade.

Whole Bird—Exposed Flesh



Grade A Whole Bird with Borderline Exposed Flesh on Breast Tip

Tolerance for exposed flesh for breast on Grade A carcasses is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch, but natural exposed flesh on the breast tip is allowed up to the heavy feather tract.



Grade B Whole Bird with Exposed Flesh on Breast Tip

Grade B carcasses may have exposed flesh provided no part on the carcass (wings, legs, entire back, or entire breast) has more than $\frac{1}{3}$ the flesh normally covered by skin exposed.

Whole Bird—Exposed Flesh



Grade A Whole Bird with Exposed Flesh on Back

Tolerance for exposed flesh on Grade A carcasses is 1 ½ inches in length or diameter on parts other than the breast and legs.



Grade B Whole Bird with Exposed Flesh on Breast

Grade B carcasses may have exposed flesh provided no part on the carcass (wings, legs, entire back, or entire breast) has more than ⅓ the flesh normally covered by skin exposed.

Whole Bird—Discoloration



Grade A Whole Bird with Light Discolora- tion

Tolerance for areas of light discoloration for Grade A carcasses on the breast and legs is 1 inch in diameter.



Grade A Whole Bird with Light Discolora- tion on Back of Wing

Tolerance for areas of light discoloration for Grade A carcasses on areas other than the breast and leg is 2 inches in diameter.

Whole Bird—Discoloration



Grade A Whole Bird with Moderate Discoloration on Back of Wing

Tolerance for moderate discoloration for Grade A carcasses on areas other than the breast and legs is 1 inch in diameter.



Grade B Whole Bird with Moderate Discoloration on Breast

Moderate discoloration is not permitted on the breast and legs for Grade A carcasses. Tolerance for moderate discoloration on Grade B carcasses is 2 inches in diameter on the breast and legs.

Whole Bird—Discoloration



Grade C Whole Bird with Moderate Aggregate Discoloration

There is no limit on size, number of areas, or intensity of discoloration for Grade C if such areas do not render any part of the carcass unfit for food.



Grade A Whole Bird with Moderate Discoloration on Hock

Moderate discolorations are limited to areas other than the breast and leg except for the area adjacent to the hock. Tolerance is ½ inch on hocks for Grade A whole bird carcasses.

Whole Bird—Discoloration



Grade A Whole Bird with Borderline En- crustation on Breast

Small lightly colored encrustations that do not detract from the overall appearance of the carcass or part are permitted.



No Grade Whole Bird with Scab on Breast

Large or darkly colored scabs that detract from the overall appearance of the carcass or part are not permitted.

Whole Bird—Bone Defects



Grade A Whole Bird with One Disjointed Wing

There is a tolerance for one disjointed bone on Grade A carcasses, but there is no tolerance for broken bones on Grade A carcasses.



Grade B Whole Bird with One Non- Protruding Broken Bone

There is a tolerance for one broken non-protruding bone for Grade B carcasses.

Whole Bird—Missing Parts



Grade A Whole Bird with Long Neck

The neck is associated as part of the whole bird carcass and does not need to be removed. Neck length is unlimited provided no part of the head is attached.



Grade A Whole Bird Wing Tips Removed

One or both wing tips may be removed at the joint or anywhere in the third portion as long as the cut is even and leaves no protruding bones.

Whole Bird—Missing Parts



Grade A Whole Bird Tail Removed

The tail may be removed at the base.



Grade B Whole Bird with Back Trimmed

The back may be trimmed in an area not wider than the base of the tail to the area halfway between the base of the tail and hip joints.

Whole Bird—Missing Parts



Grade A Whole Bird Oil Gland Removed with Oil Duct Re- maining

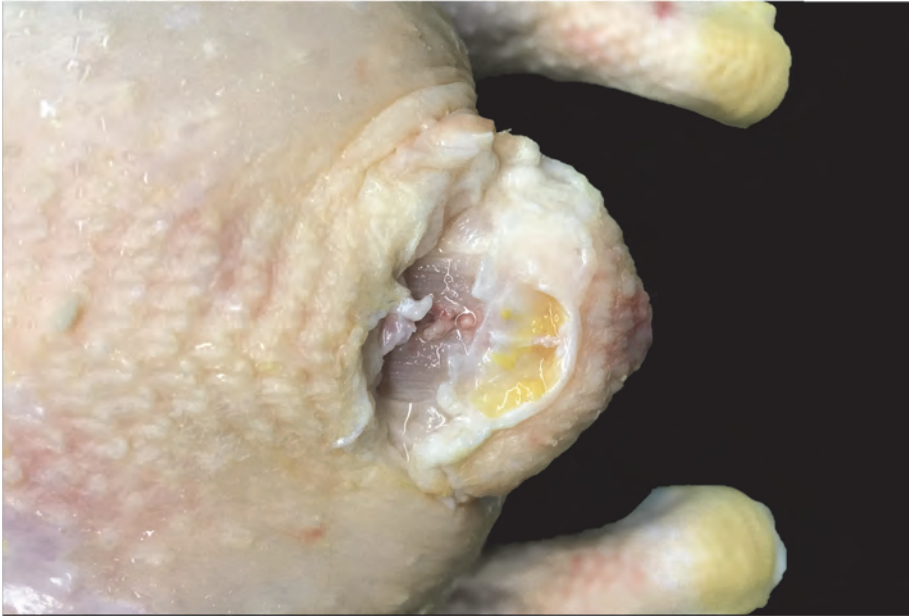
The oil duct may remain intact so long as the oil gland is removed.



No Grade Whole Bird with Oil Gland Close Up

Both lobes of the oil gland must be removed. Remnants of oil gland are permitted provided secretory material is not present.

Whole Bird—Missing Parts



Grade A Whole Bird Without Oil Gland Close Up

A small amount of yellow remnants of the oil gland are acceptable.



No Grade Whole Bird with Missing Part

There is no tolerance for missing parts on Grade A carcasses except for wing tips and tail.



Parts



Parts—Breast



Grade A Split Breast



**Grade A Split Breast
Wing Cut Tolerance**

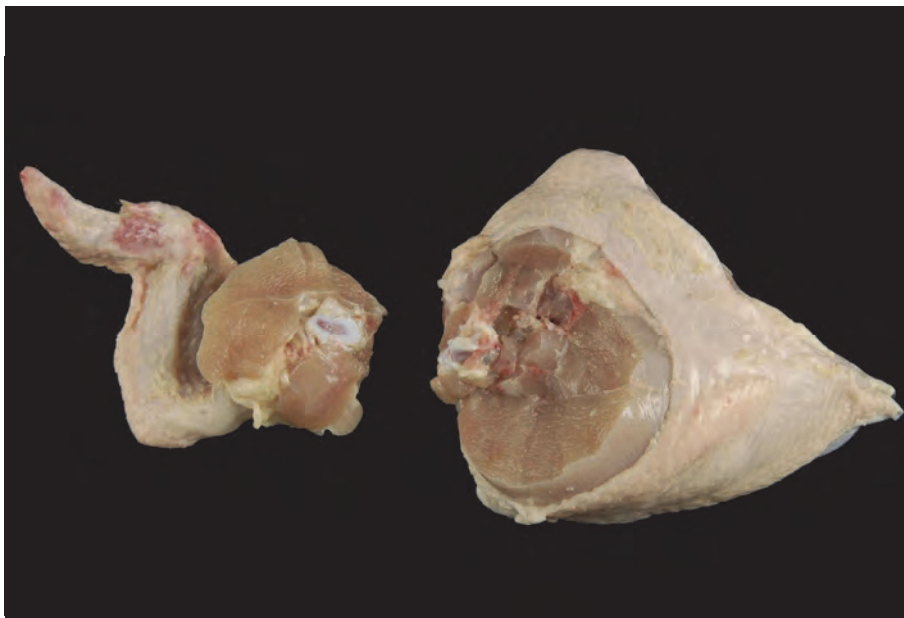
Wing cuts may extend to the heavy feather tract.

Parts—Breast



**Grade A Split Breast
with Grade A Wing**

*Cut shown is right at the
edge of the heavy feather
tract on the breast.*



**Grade C Split Breast
with Grade A Wing**

*Cut shown extends beyond
heavy feather tract re-
sulting in a Grade C breast
due to yield loss. Wings with
excess breast meat
attached are acceptable
(sometimes called “Silver
Dollar” wings).*

Parts—Breast



**Grade A Split Breast
with Exposed Flesh**

*Tolerance for Grade A parts
is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch exposed flesh.*



**Grade B Split Breast
with Exposed Flesh**

*Tolerance for Grade B parts
is up to $\frac{1}{8}$ area of flesh nor-
mally covered by the skin.*

Parts—Breast



Grade B Split Breast with Borderline Ag- gregate Light Discol- oration

Tolerance for Grade B is 1 inch aggregate area. This area of aggregate light discoloration would amount to more than 1 inch when condensed and detracts from the overall appearance.



Grade B Split Breast with Moderate Dis- coloration

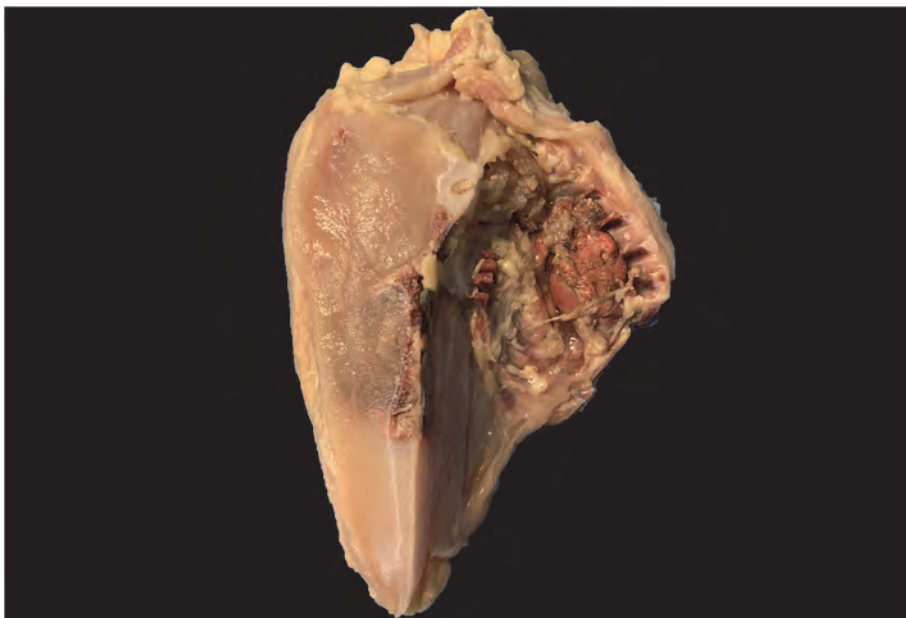
Tolerance for Grade B is 1 inch. For Grade A, there is no tolerance for moderate discoloration on breast parts.

Parts—Breast



**Grade A Split Breast
(inside) with Small
Lung**

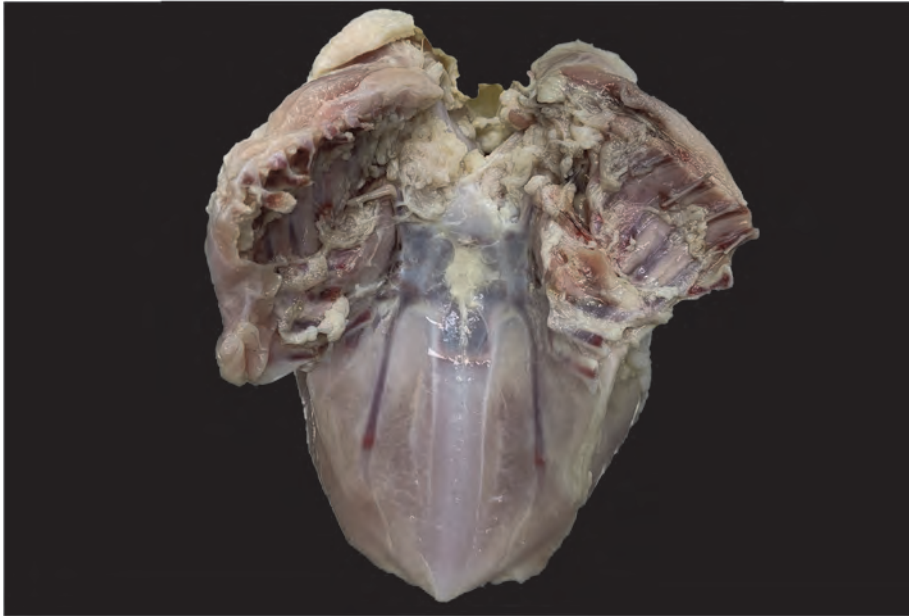
*The tolerance for lungs for
all Grades is less than $\frac{1}{4}$ of a
lung.*



**No Grade Split
Breast (inside) with
Large Lung**

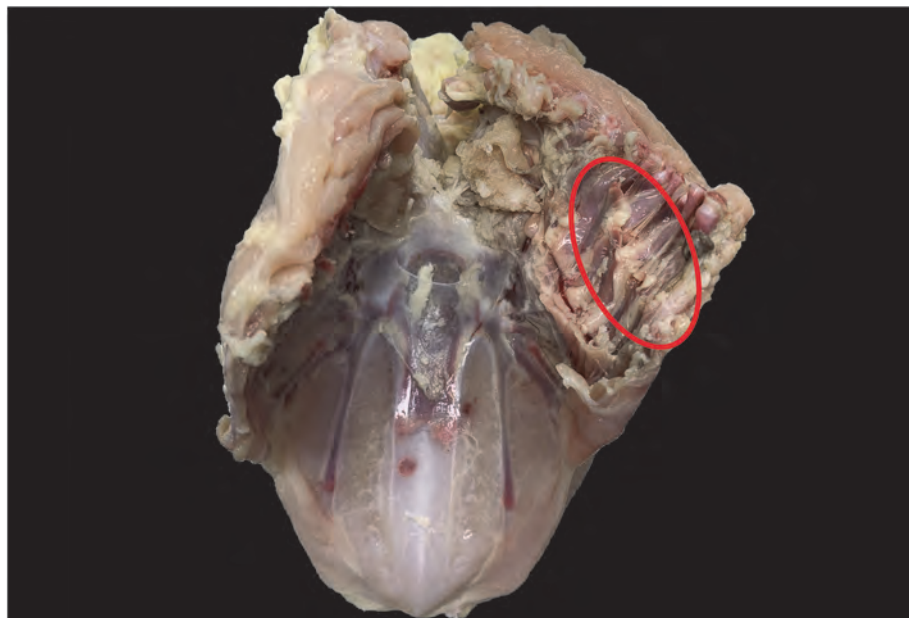
*When more than $\frac{1}{4}$ of a lung
is present, the part is con-
sidered a No Grade.*

Parts—Breast



Grade A Whole Breast with Ribs Scored for Styling Purposes (inside)

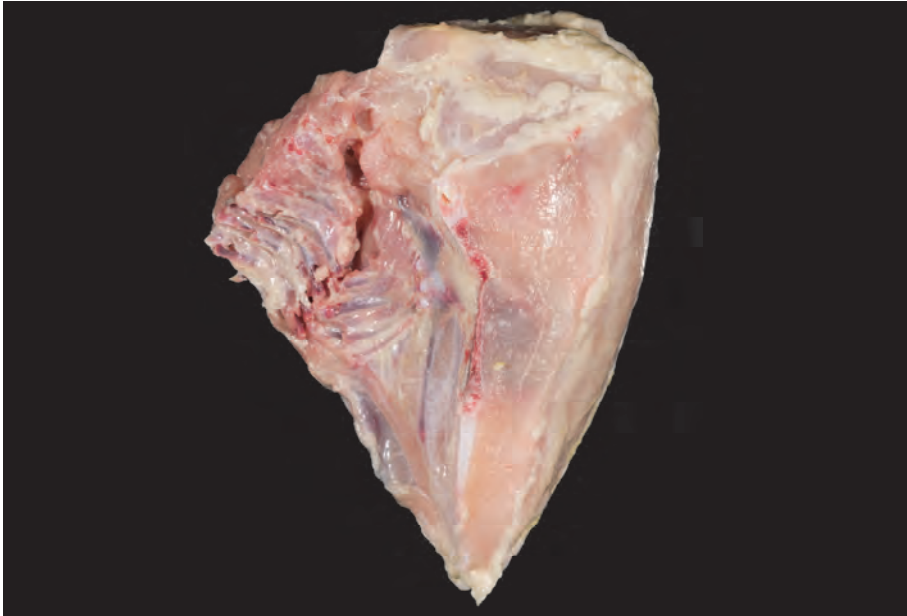
Ribs are allowed to be scored and folded for styling purposes. They may be flexible, but still intact. The score should be made evenly with no sharp broken bones.



Grade C Whole Breast with Splintered Ribs (Inside)

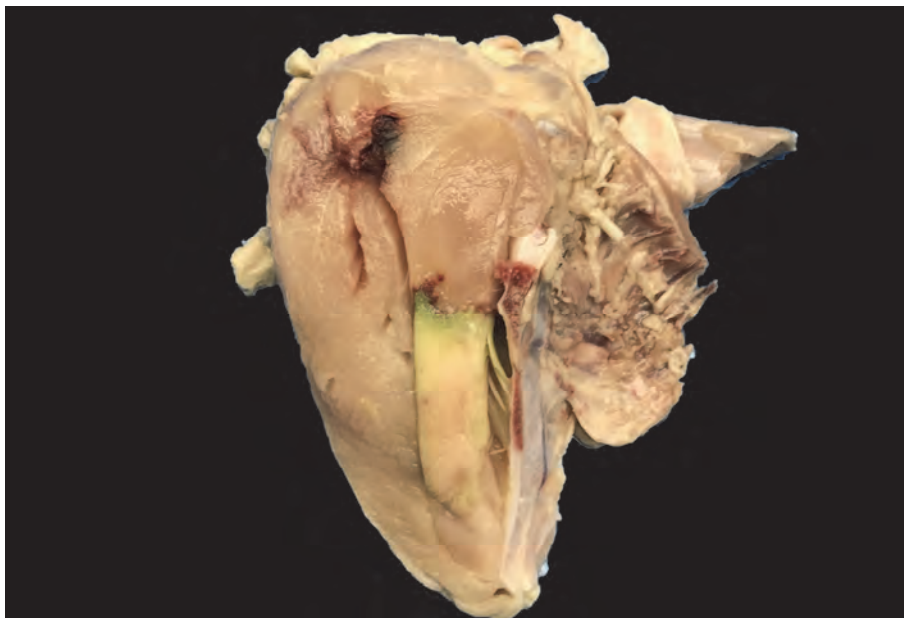
Breast with ribs that are splintered, jagged, and/or sharp are considered Grade C for broken bones.

Parts—Breast



**Grade A Split Breast
(inside) with Ribs
Folded**

*Ribs may be scored and
folded for styling purposes.*



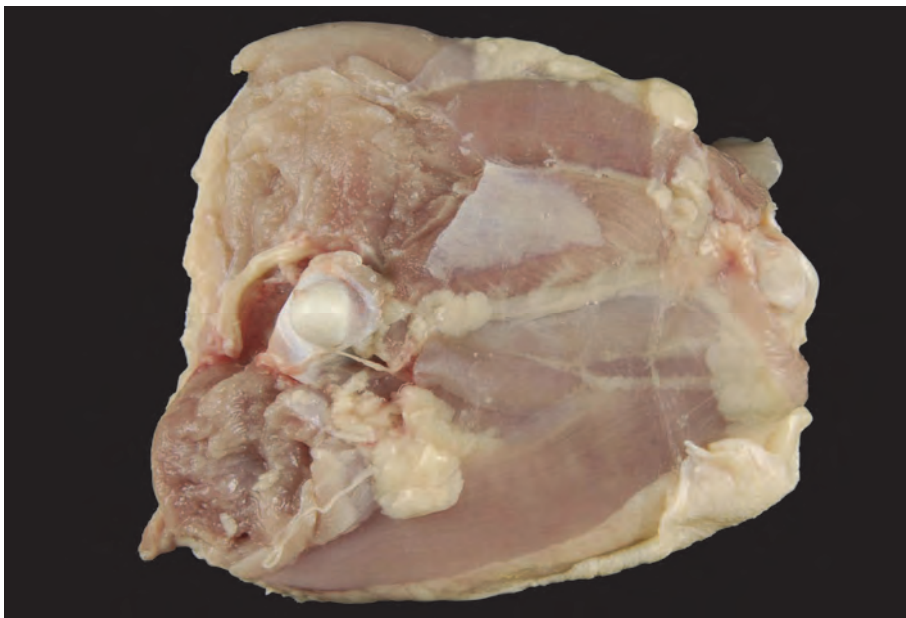
**No Grade Split
Breast with Green
Muscle Disease**

*There is no tolerance for
serious flesh defects. Prod-
uct is considered No Grade
and should be shown to
plant representative.*

Parts—Thigh

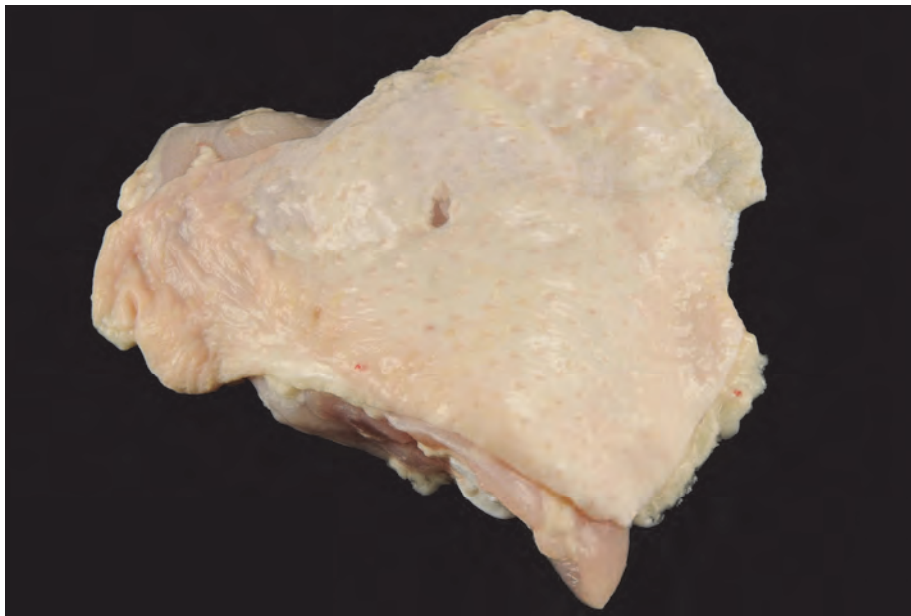


**Grade A Thigh
(outside)**



**Grade A Thigh
(inside)**

Parts—Thigh



Grade A Thigh with Exposed Flesh

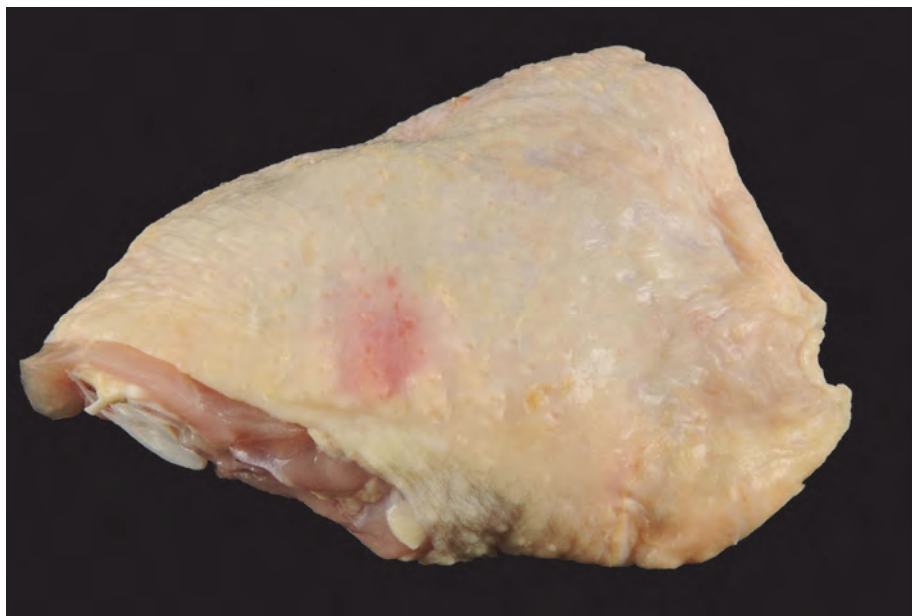
Tolerance for Grade A parts is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch. For all parts, trimming of skin along the edge is allowed, provided 75% skin associated with the part remains attached, and the remaining skin uniformly covers the outer surface.



Grade B Thigh with Exposed Flesh (exceeds $\frac{1}{4}$ inch)

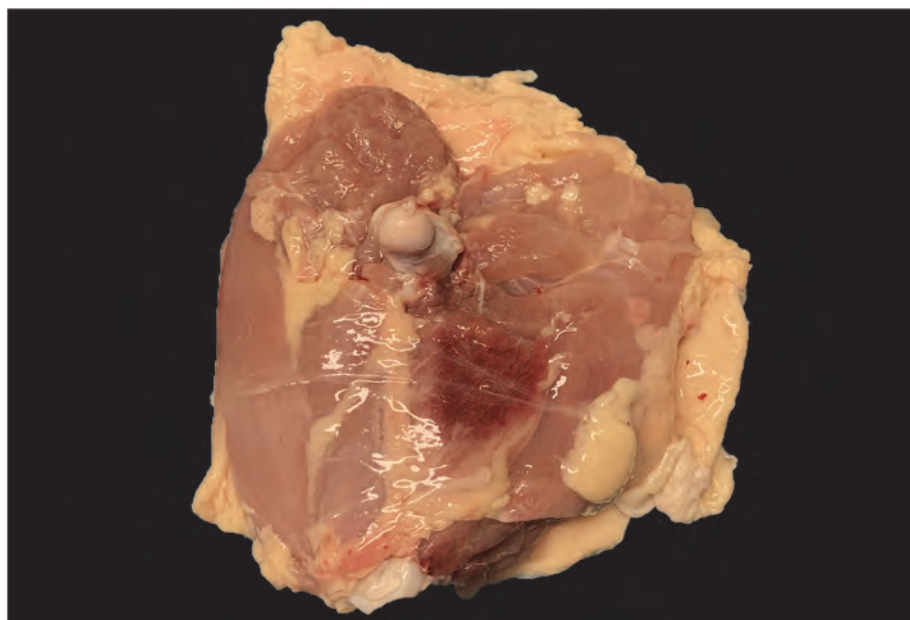
Tolerance for Grade B parts is up to $\frac{1}{3}$ area of flesh normally covered by the skin.

Parts—Thigh



Grade A Thigh with Slight Discoloration

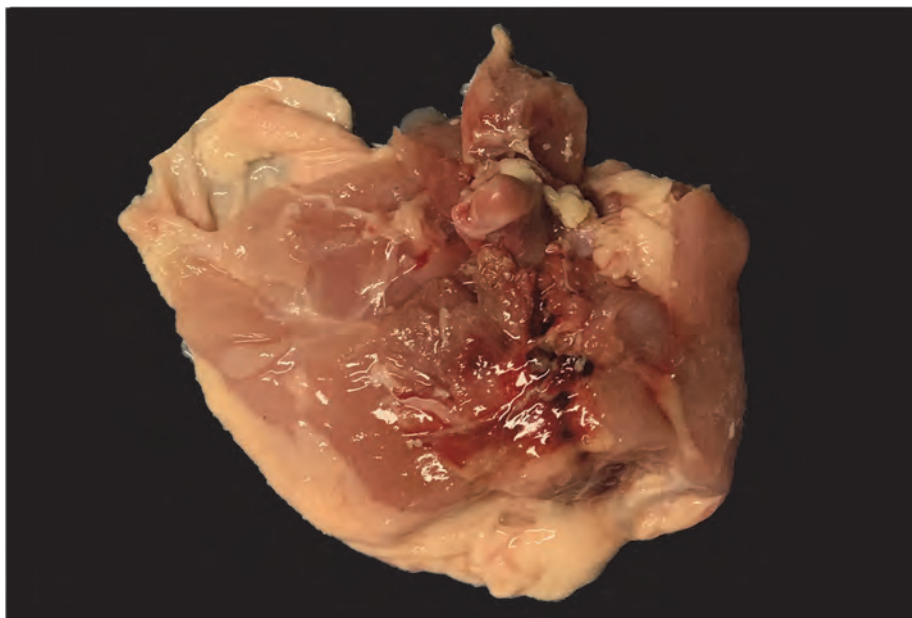
Slight discolorations are acceptable, provided they do not detract from the overall appearance of the product.



Grade A Thigh with Maximum Natural Adductor Muscle Discoloration

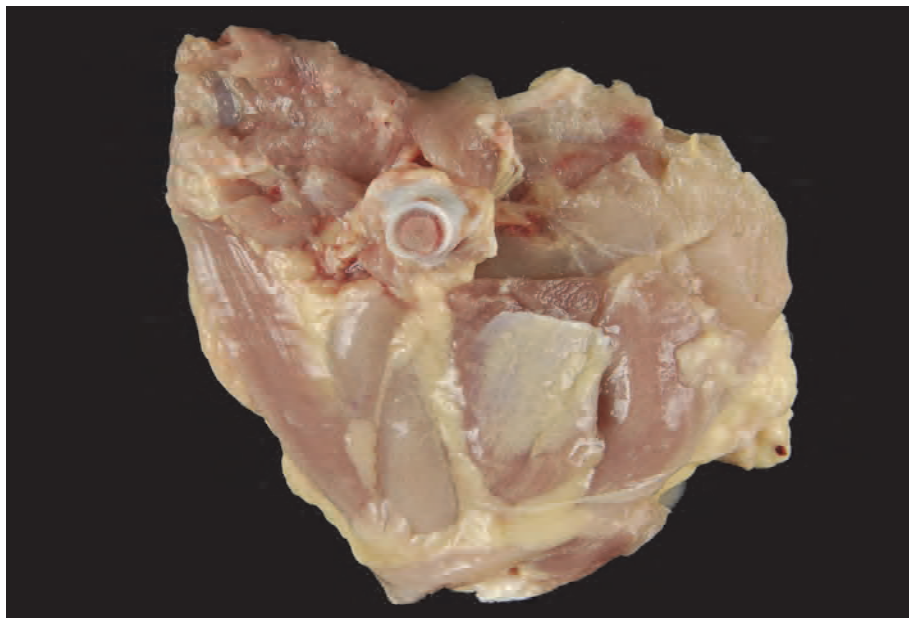
Natural discoloration of the adductor muscle on the thigh is acceptable up to this level.

Parts—Thigh



Grade C Thigh with Moderate Discoloration and Blood Clot

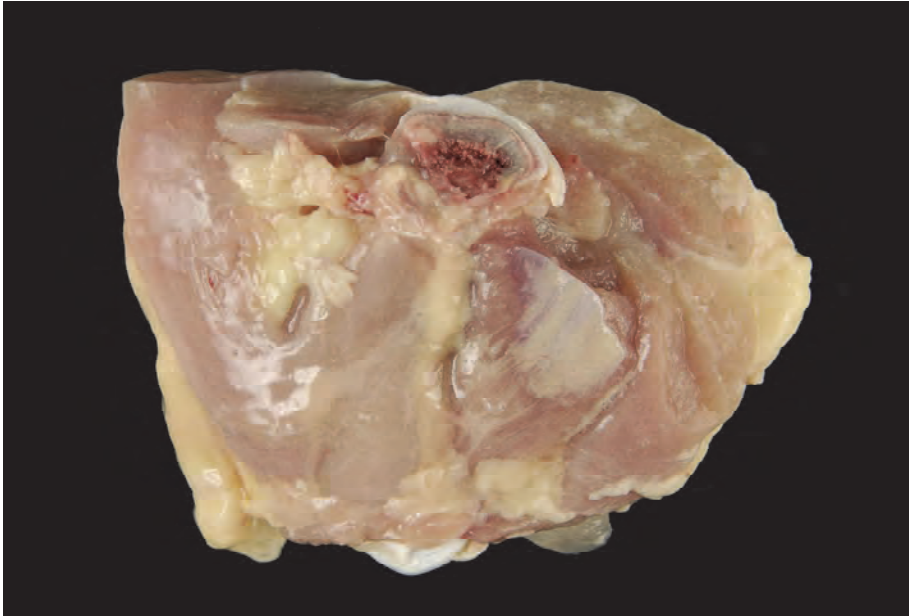
There is no tolerance for presence of blood clots for Grades A and B.



Grade A Thigh with Femur Cap Removed

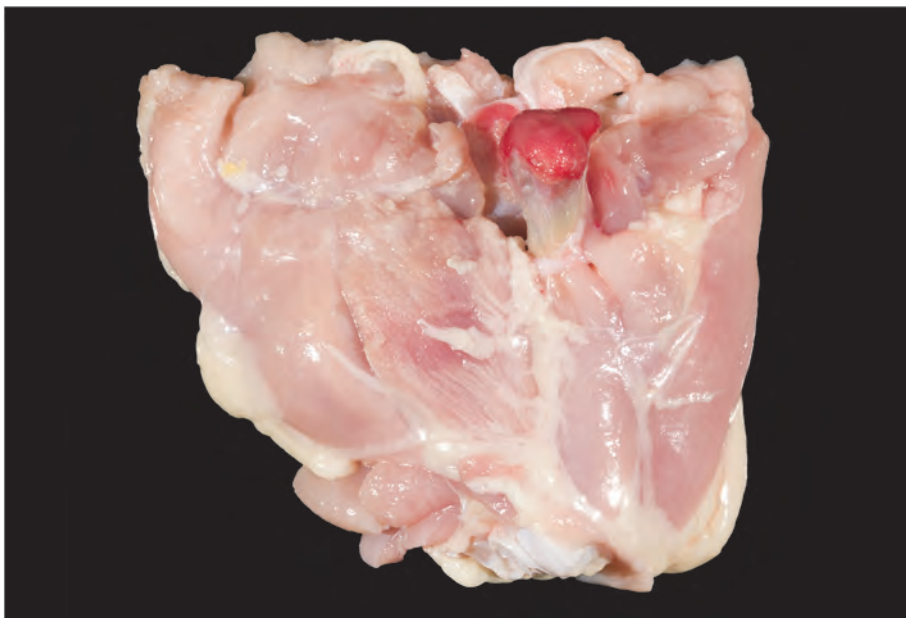
Cap of femur bone may be partially attached or removed entirely for Grade A.

Parts—Thigh



Grade C Thigh Joint Miscut

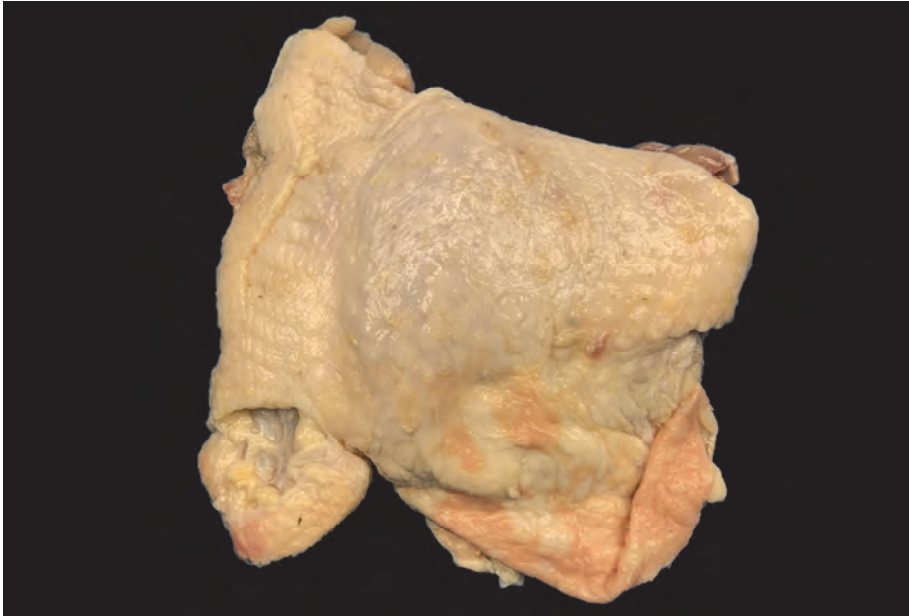
Cuts must occur within the tolerance zone referenced on page 9. Note the absence of condyle surrounding the bottom/left portion of the femur cap. Medullary cavity is clearly exposed.



Grade C Thigh Joint Miscut (Meat Not Attached to Back of Femur Cap)

Flesh must be attached to the bone. If flesh falls away from femur cap when held upright, it is considered a miscut.

Parts—Thigh



Grade A Thigh with Back Portion

Back portion (with or without tail) may be attached when labeled as such.

Parts—Drumstick



Grade A Drumstick



**No Grade Drumstick
Excessive Feathers**

Tolerance for feathers less than ½ inch:

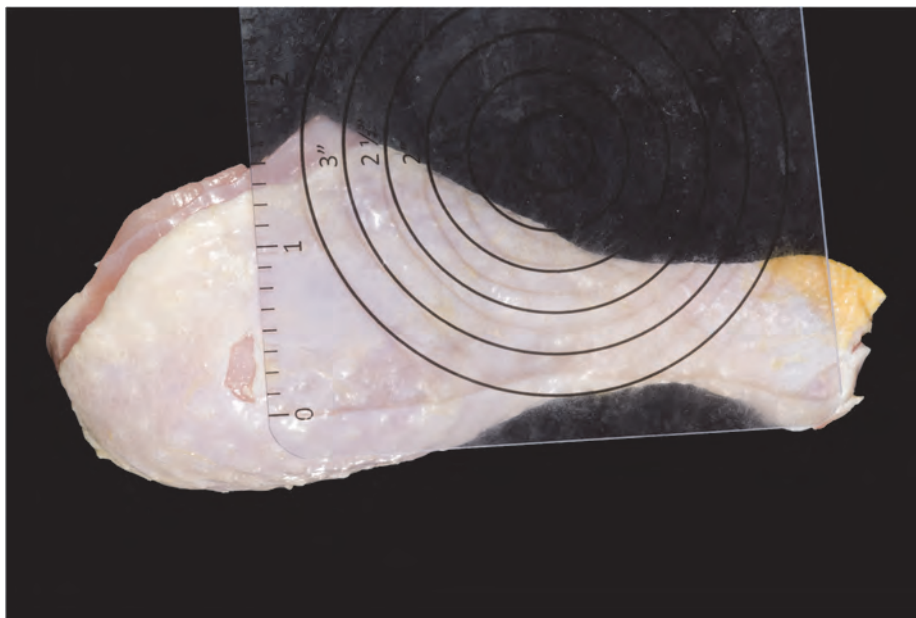
Grade A: 2 feathers

Grade B: 3 feathers

Grade C: 4 feathers

No Grade: more than 4 feathers

Parts—Drumstick



Grade B Drumstick Exposed Flesh (exceeds ¼ inch)

Tolerance for Grade B parts is up to ½ area of flesh normally covered by the skin.



Grade A Borderline Drumstick Light Dis- coloration on Hock

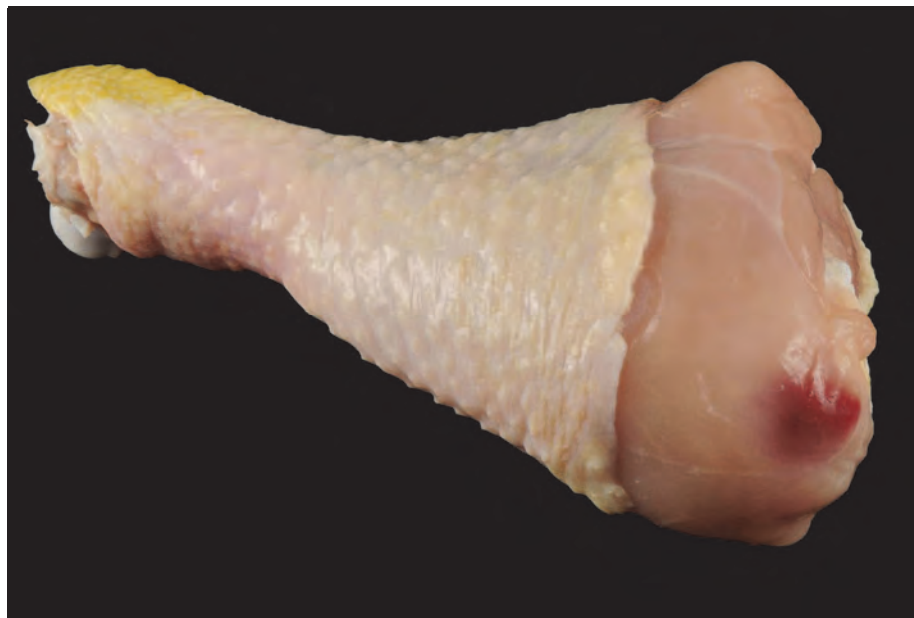
Tolerance for light discoloration on parts is ¾ inches of aggregate area. This photo shows the maximum allowable area of aggregate light discoloration.

Parts—Drumstick



Grade A Drumstick Moderate Discoloration on Hock

Moderately shaded discolorations are limited to areas other than the leg except for the area adjacent to the hock. Tolerance is $\frac{3}{8}$ inch area for parts.



Grade B Drumstick Moderate Discoloration

Tolerance for moderate discolorations for Grade B is 1 inch.

Parts—Drumstick



Grade A Drumstick Borderline Hock Cut

Cut occurred in tolerance zone referenced on page 9 as evident by presence of condyle.



Grade C Drumstick Hock Miscut

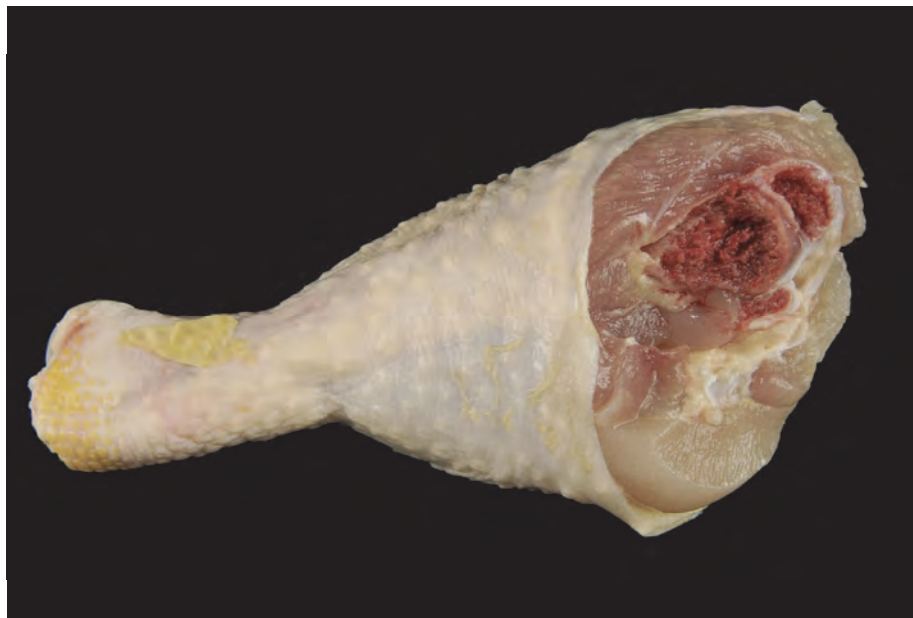
Cuts must occur within the tolerance zone referenced on page 9. Note that the tendon has been severed and is visible below the bone.

Parts—Drumstick



Grade A Drumstick Borderline Joint Cut

Cut occurred in tolerance zone referenced on page 9 as evident by presence of condyle.



Grade C Drumstick Joint Miscut

Cuts must occur within the tolerance zone referenced on page 9. Note the absence of condyle surrounding the left portion of the bone. Medullary cavity is clearly exposed.

Parts—Drumstick



No Grade Drumstick with Excessive Skin

Skin or fat not normally associated with the part may not be included unless stated on the label. Skin is considered excessive when it extends more than 1 ½ inches beyond the meat tissue of the part.

Parts—Wing



**Grade A Whole
Wing**



**Grade A First Seg-
ment Wing Portion
(Wing Drummette)**

Parts—Wing



**Grade A Second
Segment Wing Por-
tion (Wing Flat)**



**Grade B Wing with
Feathers**

*Tolerance for feathers less
than ½ inch:*

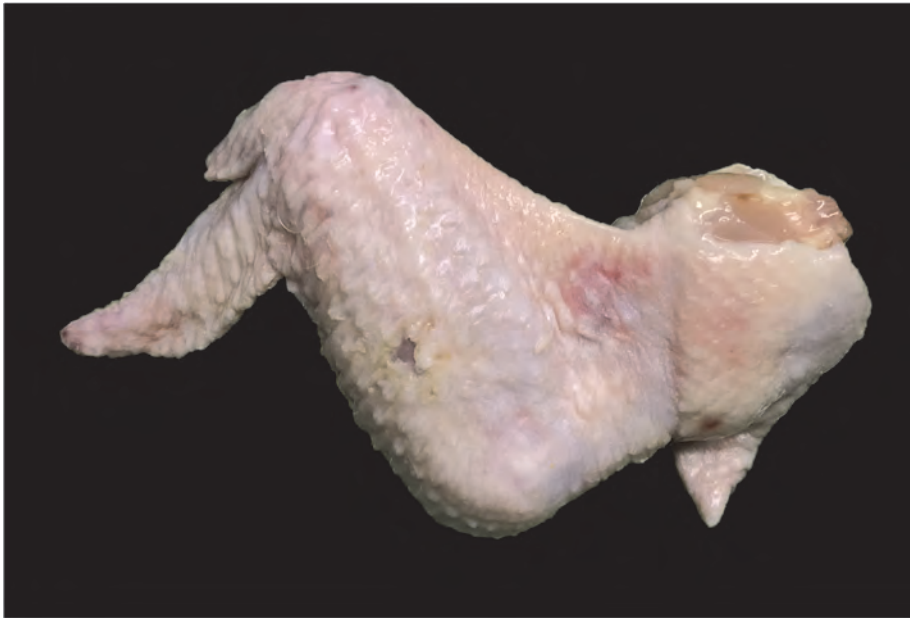
Grade A: 2 feathers

Grade B: 3 feathers

Grade C: 4 feathers

*No Grade: more than 4
feathers*

Parts—Wing



Grade A Wing with Exposed Flesh

Tolerance for Grade A parts is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch.



Grade B Wing with Exposed Flesh

Tolerance for Grade B parts is up to $\frac{1}{3}$ area of flesh normally covered by the skin.

Parts—Wing



**Grade A Wing with
Borderline Discolor-
ation on Back of
Wing**

*Tolerance for light discolor-
ation on parts is $\frac{3}{4}$ inch in
diameter.*



**Grade A Wing with
Moderate Discolora-
tion**

*Tolerance for moderate dis-
coloration on parts other
than breast and leg is $\frac{3}{8}$
inch in diameter.*

Parts—Wing



Grade B Second Segment Wing with Aggregate Moderate Discoloration

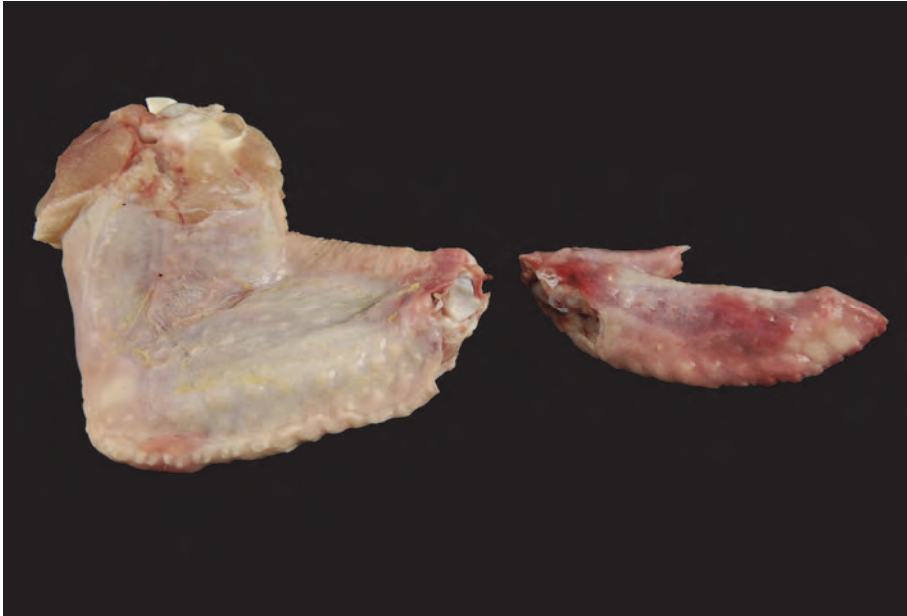
Tolerance for Grade B parts is 1 inch in diameter maximum aggregate area.



Grade B Wing with Moderate Discoloration

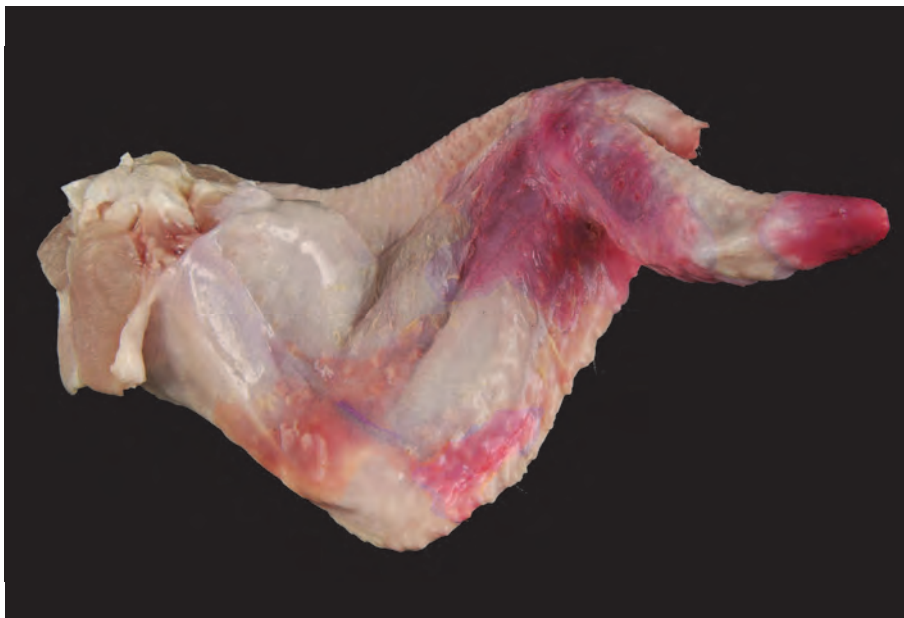
Tolerance for Grade B parts is 1 inch in diameter maximum aggregate area.

Parts—Wing



Grade A Wing after Wing Tip with Moderate Discoloration is Removed

Wings tips with discoloration can be removed to retain the quality of the part.



Grade C Wing with Moderate Discoloration

There is no limit for discoloration for Grade C parts so long as it does not render any part unfit for food.

Parts—Wing



**Grade A Wing with
Borderline Cut**

Cut occurred in tolerance zone referenced on page 10 as evident by presence of condyle.



**Grade C Wing with
Miscut**

Cuts must occur within the tolerance zone referenced on page 10. Medullary cavity of the bone shaft is clearly exposed.

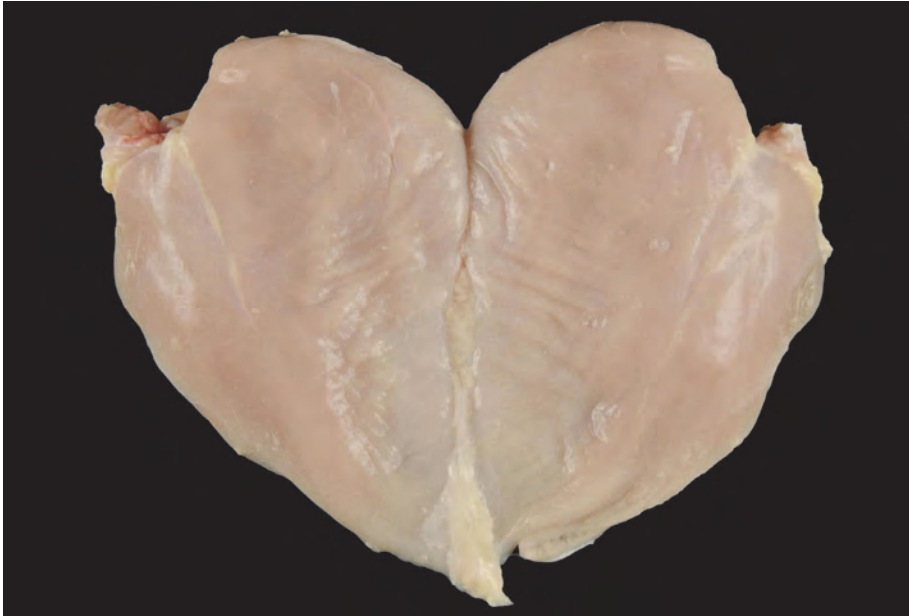


Agricultural Marketing Service
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Boneless/Skinless Parts



Boneless/Skinless Parts—Breast

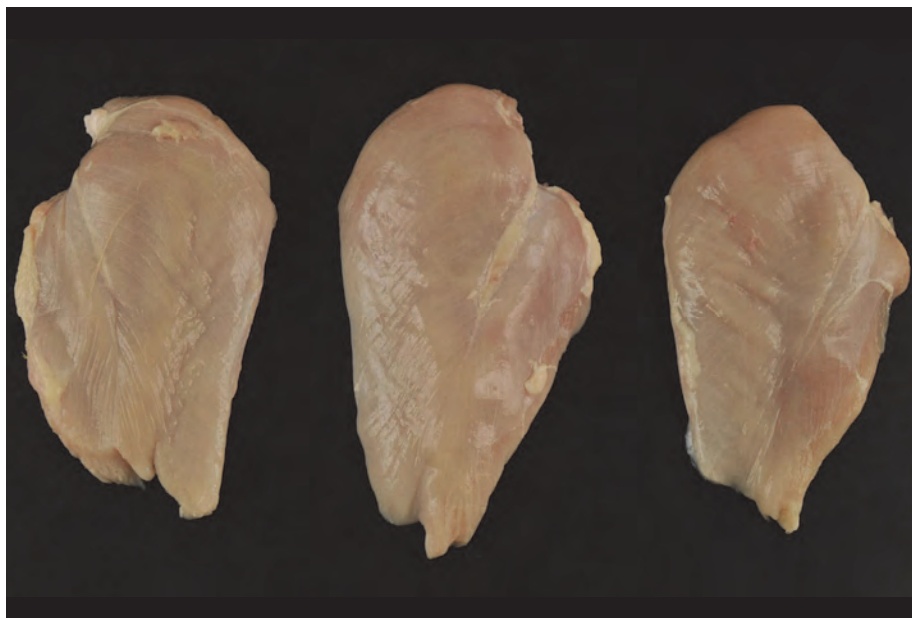


**Grade A Boneless
Skinless Whole
Breast Butterfly**



**Grade A Boneless
Skinless Half Breast**

Boneless/Skinless Parts—Breast



Grade A Boneless Skinless Breast Half with Acceptable Shape

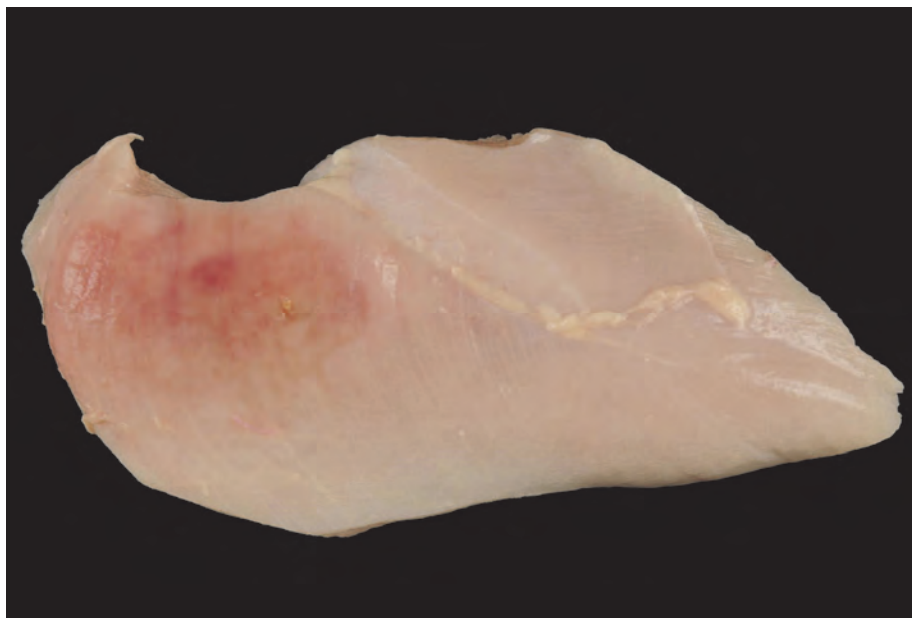
Trimming of the meat along the outer edges is permitted provided at least ½ the part remains intact and the normal symmetrical appearance of the part is retained.



No Grade Boneless Skinless Breast with Skin

There is no tolerance for attached skin on boneless skinless parts.

Boneless/Skinless Parts—Breast



No Grade Boneless Skinless Breast with Discoloration

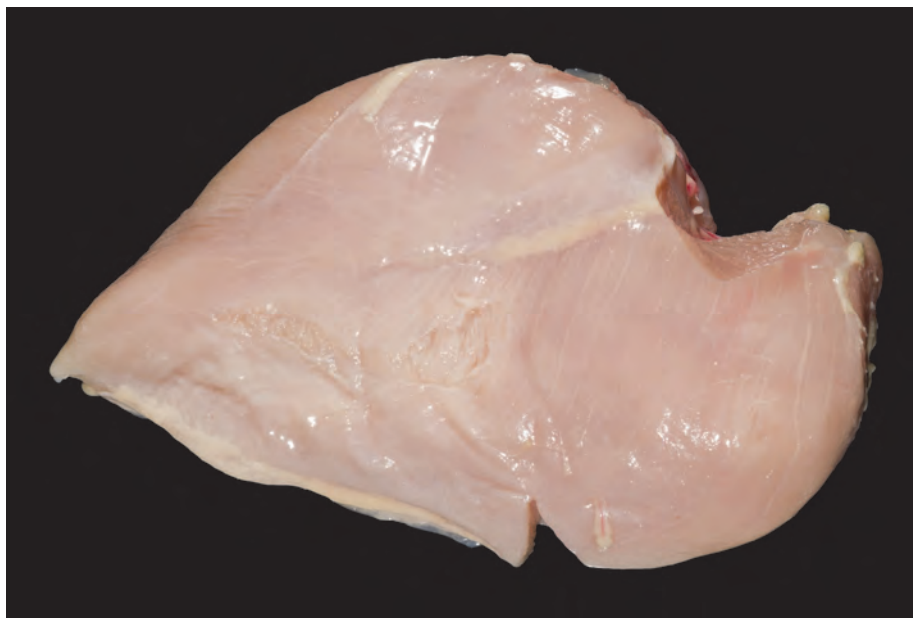
There is no tolerance for light or moderate discoloration on boneless skinless parts. Only slight discoloration is allowed.



No Grade Boneless Skinless Breast Tip Removed

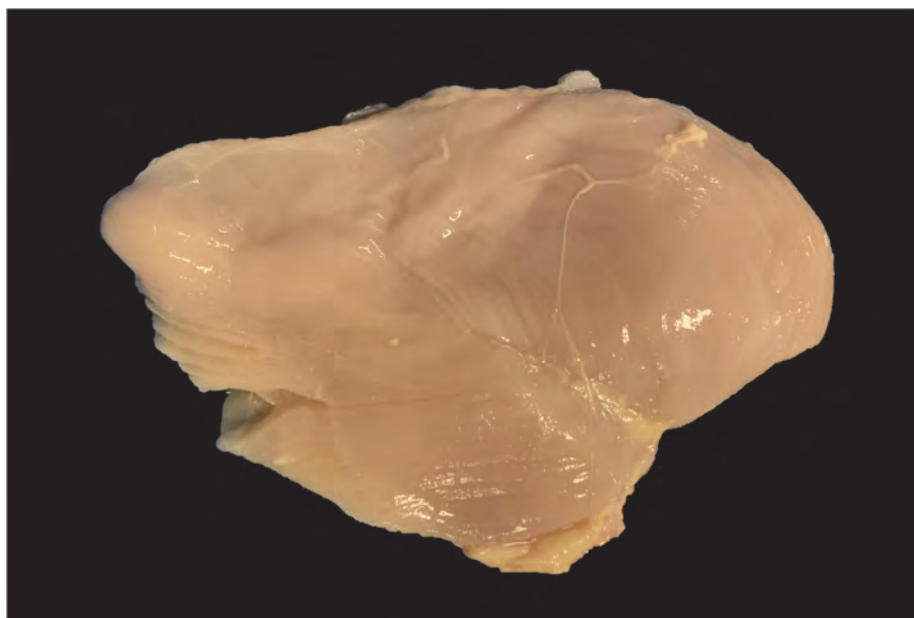
Trimming of the meat along the outer edges affected the normal symmetrical shape and appearance of the part.

Boneless/Skinless Parts—Breast



Grade A Boneless Skinless Breast Bor- derline Tear and Mi- nor Abrasion in Flesh

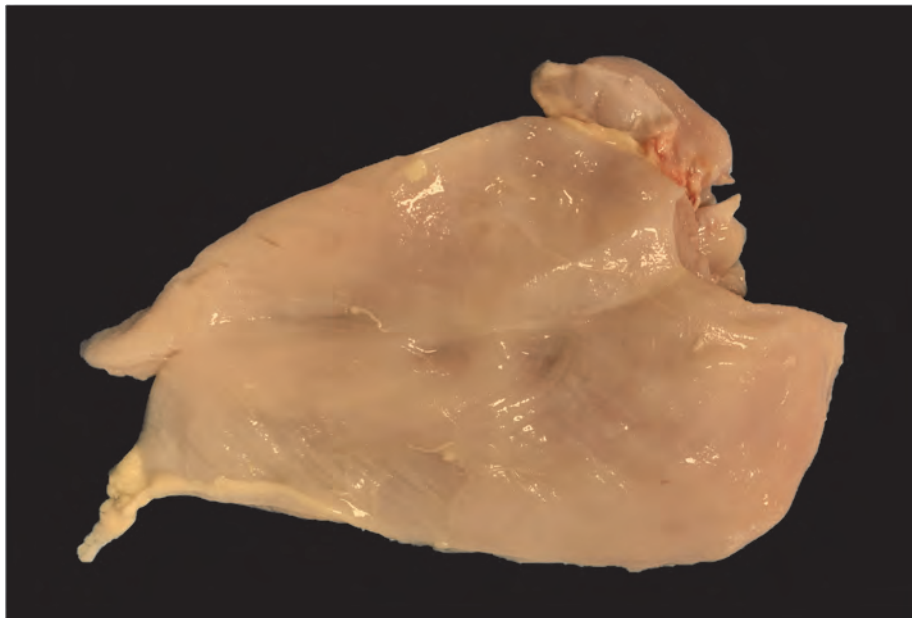
*Minor abrasion and separa-
tion of the muscle tissue is
permitted provided it does
not detract from the overall
appearance of the part.*



Grade A Boneless Skinless Breast Bor- derline Tear with Grain of Muscle

*Separation of the muscle
tissue is permitted provided
it does not detract from the
overall appearance of the
part.*

Boneless/Skinless Parts—Breast



Grade A Boneless Skinless Breast with Cut at Tip

Separation of the muscle tissue is permitted provided it does not detract from the overall appearance of the part.



No Grade Boneless Skinless Breast Split Tip

Separation of muscle tissue detracts from the overall appearance of the part.

Boneless/Skinless Parts—Breast



No Grade Boneless Skinless Breast with Abrasion in Flesh

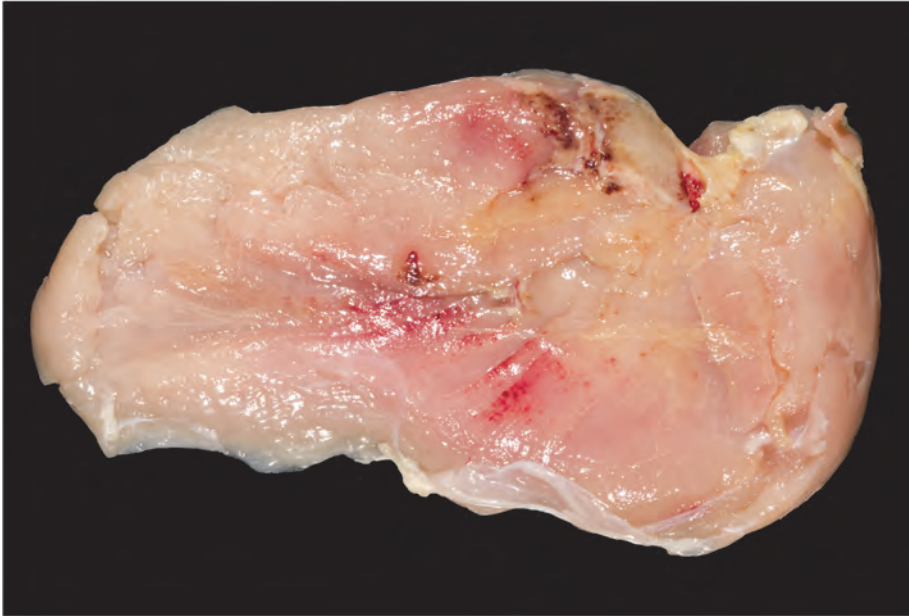
Abrasions resulting in an angular indentation as shown are not permitted. Minor flesh abrasions with smooth and even appearance that do not detract from the overall appearance are acceptable.



No Grade Boneless Skinless Breast with Over-Scalded Flesh

There is no tolerance for over-scalded flesh. Product is considered No Grade and should be shown to plant representative.

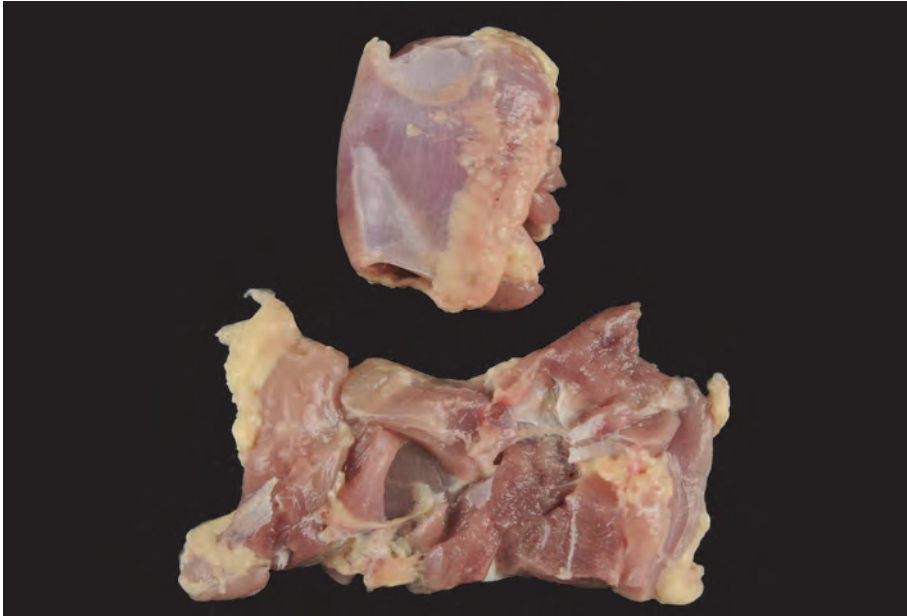
Boneless/Skinless Parts—Breast



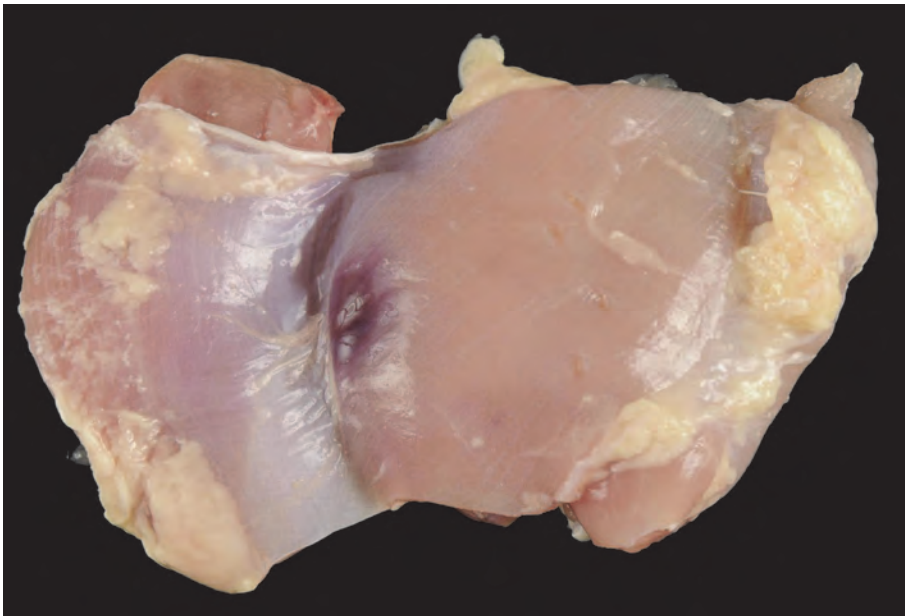
No Grade Boneless Skinless Breast with Serious Flesh Defect

There is no tolerance for serious flesh defects. Product is considered No Grade and should be shown to plant representative.

Boneless/Skinless Parts—Thigh



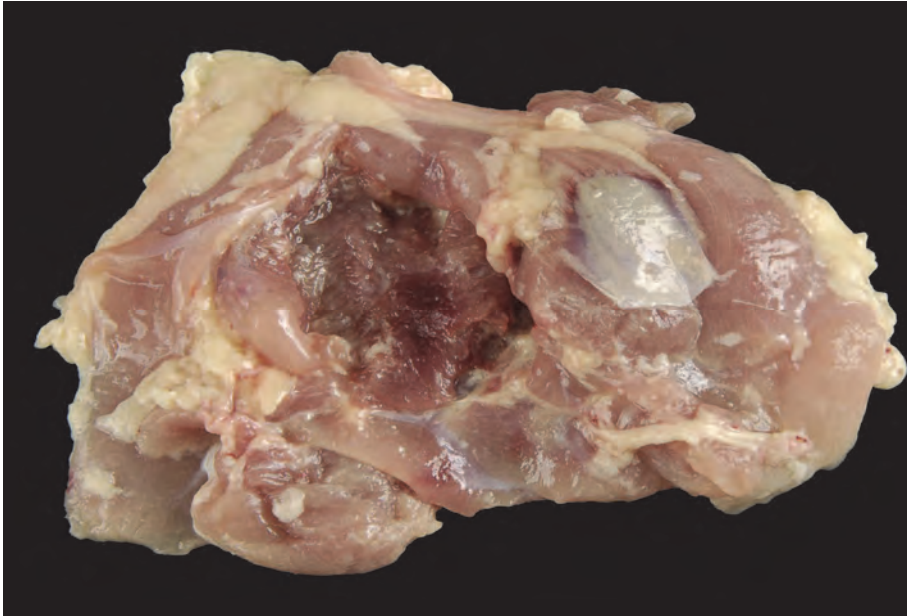
**Grade A Boneless
Skinless Thigh**



**No Grade Boneless
Skinless Thigh with
Moderate Discolora-
tion**

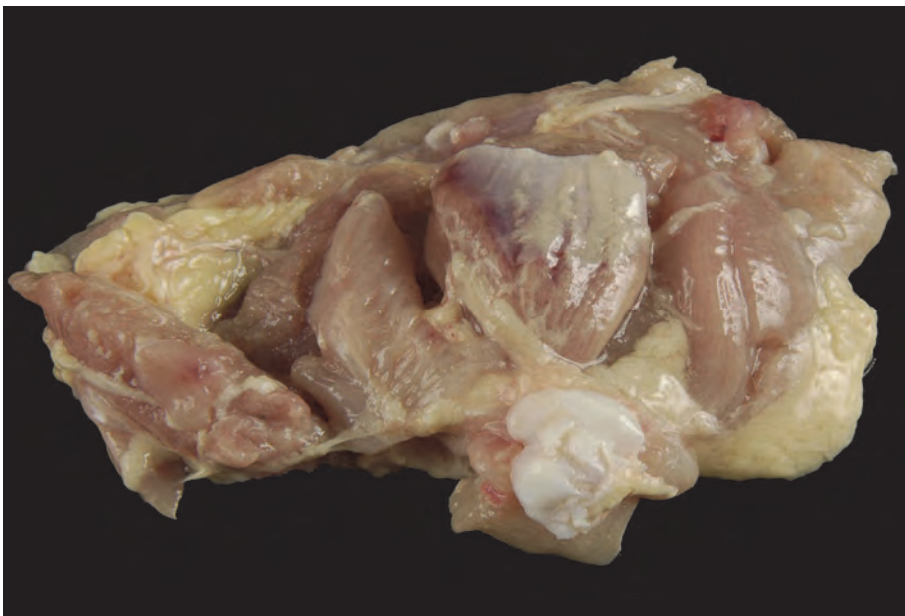
There is no tolerance for light or moderate discoloration on boneless skinless parts. Only slight discoloration is allowed.

Boneless/Skinless Parts—Thigh



No Grade Boneless Skinless Thigh with Moderate Discoloration

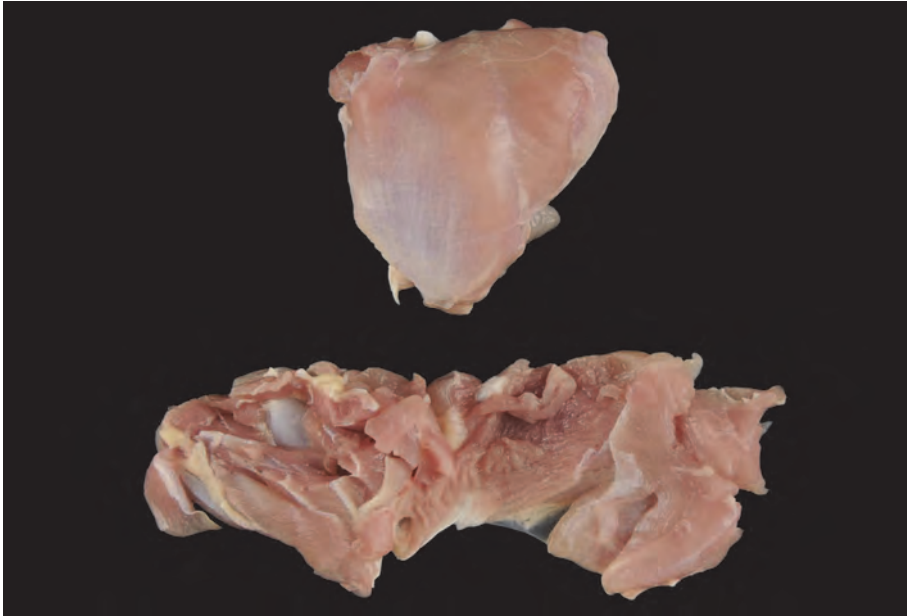
There is no tolerance for light or moderate discoloration on boneless skinless parts. Only slight discoloration is allowed.



No Grade Boneless Skinless Thigh with Bone

There is no tolerance for bone or bone fragments in boneless skinless parts.

Boneless/Skinless Parts—Drumstick



**Grade A Boneless
Skinless Drumstick**



**No Grade Boneless
Skinless Drumstick
with Bone**

*There is no tolerance for
bone or bone fragments in
boneless skinless parts.*

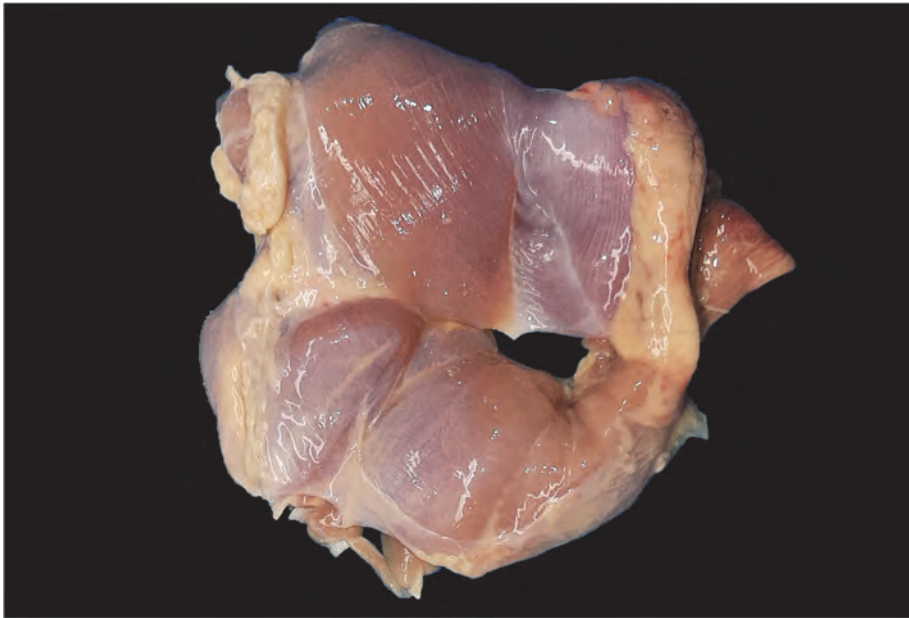
Boneless/Skinless Parts—Drumstick



No Grade Boneless Skinless Drumstick with Excessive Ten- don

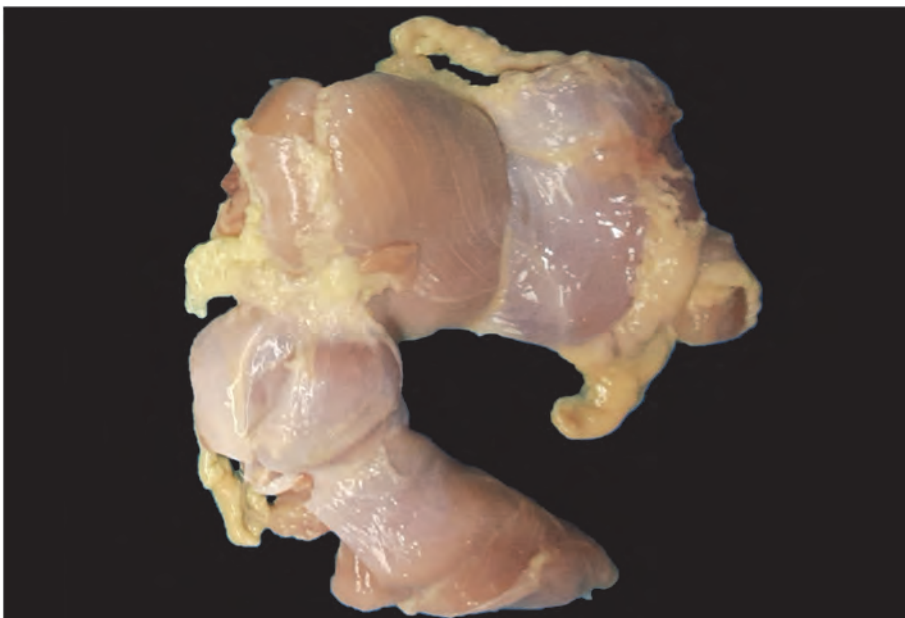
*The tolerance for tendons in
boneless skinless drums is ½
inch beyond the meat tis-
sue.*

Boneless/Skinless Parts—Whole Leg



Grade A Boneless Skinless Whole Leg

For boneless skinless legs, holes in the meat resulting from the removal of the patella (knee cap) are permitted provided the bulk of the drumstick and thigh remains intact and connected.



No Grade Boneless/ Skinless Whole Leg

The bulk of the drumstick and thigh must remain intact and connected.

Boneless/Skinless Parts—Tenderloin



Grade A Tenderloin



**Grade A Tenderloin
with Attached Ten-
don**

*Tendons normally associat-
ed with tenderloins are per-
mitted. There is no limit for
length of the tendon.*

Boneless/Skinless Parts—Tenderloin



Grade A Tenderloin with Slight Discoloration

Slight discoloration is permitted so long as it does not detract from the overall appearance of the part.



No Grade Tenderloin with Moderate Discoloration

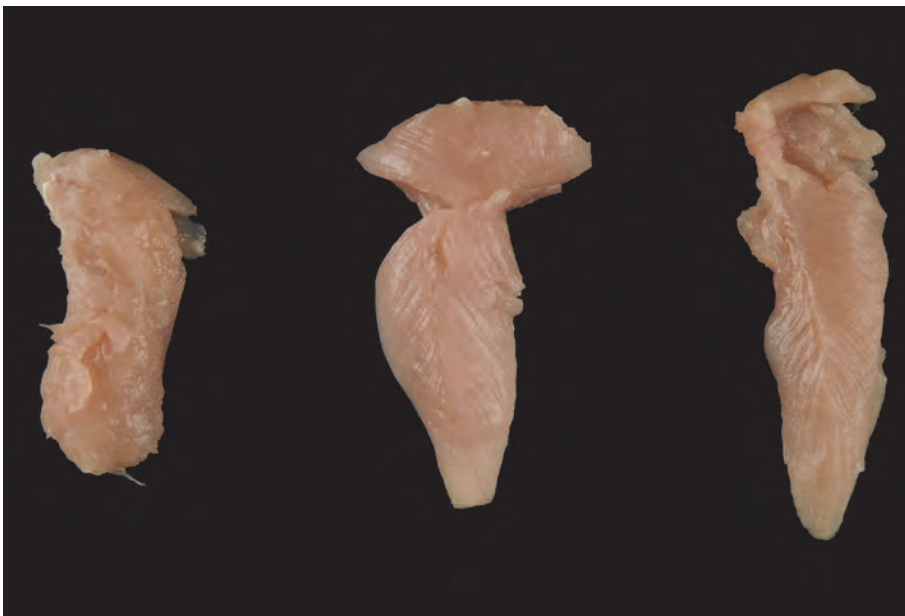
There is no tolerance for light or moderate discoloration on boneless skinless parts. Only slight discoloration is allowed.

Boneless/Skinless Parts—Tenderloin



Grade A Tenderloins Exhibiting Border-line Flesh Separations

Separation of the muscle tissue is permitted, provided it does not detract from the overall appearance of the part.



No Grade Tenderloins Exhibiting Flesh Mutilation

Separation of the muscle tissue detracts from the overall appearance.

Boneless/Skinless Parts—Tenderloin



Grade A Tenderloin with Maximum Ac- ceptable Amount of Attached Tissue

Strands of tenderloin tissue not attached to the tendon may be present, provided they do not detract from the overall appearance of the product.



No Grade Tenderloin with Unacceptable Amount of Attached Tissue

Strands of tenderloin tissue detract from the overall appearance of the tendon.

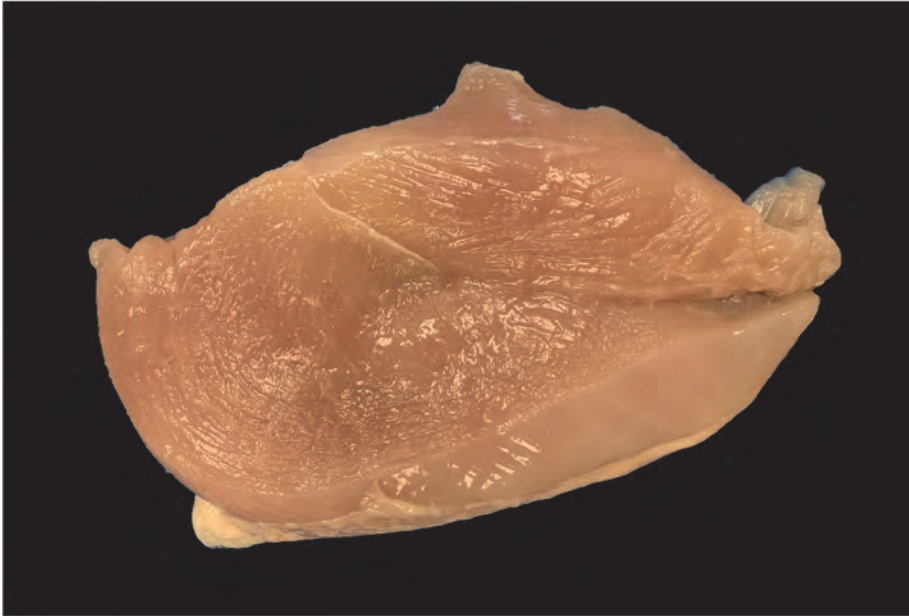
Boneless/Skinless Parts—Tenderloin



No Grade Tenderloin with Hole

There is no tolerance for holes in the muscle tissue.

Boneless/Skinless Parts—Size Reduced



**Grade A Thin Sliced
Breast**



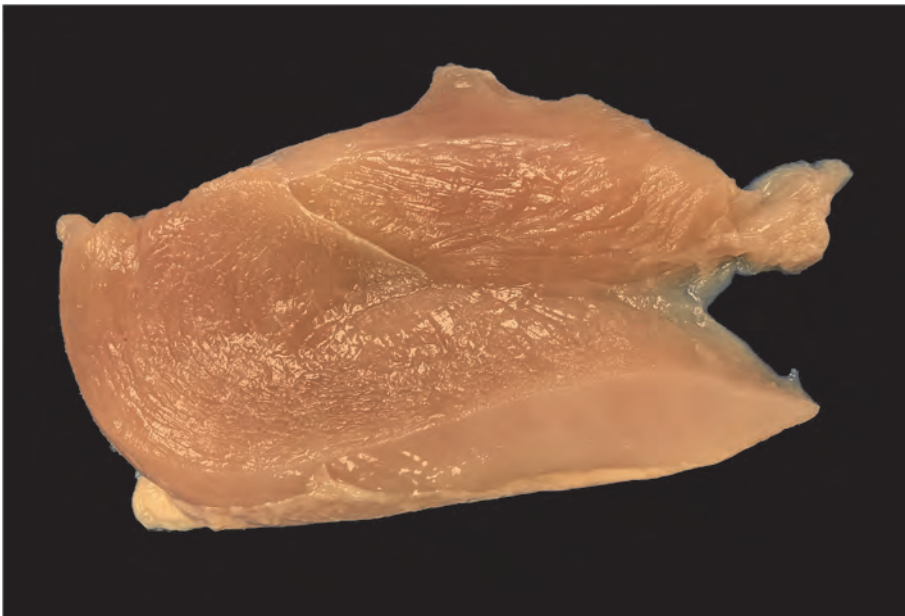
**Grade A Thin Sliced
Breast**

Boneless/Skinless Parts—Size Reduced



Grade A Thin Sliced Breast with Natural Separation between the Muscles

Holes occurring naturally between muscles are acceptable. Holes occurring through muscle tissue would not be acceptable.



Grade A Thin Sliced Breast with Borderline Acceptable Shape

Variation in shape of the outer edges of the individual portions of meat are permitted.



Agricultural Marketing Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Poultry Picture Series

A Guide to U.S. Graded Chicken

A resource that illustrates the various defects described in the official U.S. Classes, Standards, and Grades for Poultry. Focusing on chicken carcasses and parts in the 2-6 lb. size range, the Poultry Picture Series is a visual representation of our Standards that will aid in uniformly interpreting grade standards for USDA poultry commodity graders, industry, academia, and food buyers.

To request a printed copy or download a digital copy, visit:
<https://www.ams.usda.gov/grades-standards/poultry>

