



APPROVED SPECIFICATIONS FOR CITY/STATE AND LARGE VOLUME FOOD BUYERS GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

Policy

This procedure states information about certifying product under approved specifications.

Procedure

An applicant for specification certification service must submit two copies of the specification to the Quality Assessment Division in the National Office directly or through the supervisor in the state where the applicant is headquartered. The following procedures apply only to poultry and poultry products produced according to approved specifications listed on AGNIS.

Upon receipt of the specification, the national supervisor will review and approve the information or advise the applicant of the reason(s) for disapproval. If the specification is approved, a letter enclosing a copy of the approved specification will be returned to the applicant listing their responsibilities. The applicant will be requested to provide copies of the specification to each supplier and the applicable USDA grader. Each page of an approved specification will have an approval stamp bearing the date of approval with the signature of the national supervisor. Additionally, each page will be sequentially numbered as follows: 1 of 5, 2 of 5, etc. The original copy of the approved specification will be retained in the National Office. A copy of the letter, application, and approved specification will be sent to the appropriate supervisor and regional office. Copies of the specification will also be sent to other Regional Offices and supervisors for information purposes. The National Office will periodically update the list of approved specifications. The list will itemize each product eligible for certification including brand names when appropriate. All approved specifications must be treated as confidential at all times. Only USDA representatives and the company authorized by the applicant to produce the product shall have access to the specifications.

Plant management is responsible for advising graders when they are preparing to pack poultry or poultry products in accordance with an approved specification. However, each grader must be familiar with the approved specification list and, to the extent possible, be aware when poultry or poultry products with approved specifications are being produced. When a plant produces product requiring compliance with an approved specification, graders shall review and familiarize themselves with the specification requirements and assure that all provisions of the specification are met. If plant management is unable or refuses to provide a copy of the required specification, the grader shall contact his/her supervisor, request a copy of the specification, and review the requirements and responsibilities outlined in the specification and this section. If necessary, the supervisor shall contact plant management to clarify certification requirements and resolve the issue.

Should the plant elect to continue production without resolving the issue(s), the grader shall not interfere with production. The supervisor will contact the specification applicant for further clarification. During the interim period, there will be no certification of specification



requirements. Should the product bear a grademark, applicable grade requirements must be met or retention is required on that basis.

If a plant is attempting to legitimately pack product in compliance with an approved specification but fails, product not meeting the provisions of the specification shall be placed under USDA retention as outlined in QAD 538. If the product otherwise meets applicable USDA grade requirements and the plant desires to ship the product, the plant shall call the person authorized to waive specification requirements as stated on the approved specification. If a waiver is granted, the waiver must be provided to the grader directly, either verbally or written. The grader shall document the appropriate information on the certificate and release the product. If provisions of the specification are waived frequently or over an extended period of time, the grader shall notify the supervisor who, through the Regional Director, will notify the National Office. The National Supervisor will review the matter with the specification applicant and recommend that they consider modifying the specification or terminate its approval.

Within three months of all new specification approvals, the supervisor responsible for supervising the state where the applicant is located shall contact the applicant to review responsibilities, answer questions, and resolve any issues that may have developed. Subsequent follow-up visits shall be conducted on an annual or more frequent basis as determined by the Regional Director.

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