

# Agricultural Marketing Service

Creating Opportunities for American Farmers and Businesses

## USDA Grading Services for the Livestock, Meat, Poultry, and Egg Industries

The Quality Assessment Division (QAD), part of the AMS Livestock, Poultry, and Seed (LPS) Program, provides USDA Grading and Certification services for meat, poultry and eggs on a voluntary, fee-for-service basis. These services are provided by over 850 highly trained, impartial USDA graders nationwide. Our services assist in the marketing of agricultural products worldwide.



### USDA Grading Service

There are quality standards and grades for a variety of meats, poultry and rabbit carcasses, parts, and products, as well as shell eggs.

At the request of the buyer or seller, products can be officially graded by USDA. The grademark, or USDA shield, indicates that USDA has officially graded the product and that the product met all the requirements of the designated quality standard.

Once the product meets the grade standard, then the producer or processor is allowed to market their products by using the USDA Grade Shield on the product labeling.

Examples of the highest USDA Grade shields are below. The highest grade for Beef is USDA Prime; the highest grade for Shell Eggs is USDA Grade AA; and the highest grade for Poultry is USDA Grade A.



The Grade shields identify that the commodity has been examined and certified by a USDA grader for the quality indicated.

Look for the USDA Grade Shield –  
Your Ultimate Assurance of Quality

## Certification Service

In addition to traditional grading service, QAD graders also certify that certain products meet end-user specifications. These specifications can be for commodities purchased by USDA including USDA Nutrition Assistance Program purchases (for outlets such as the National School Lunch Program) and deal with characteristics such as weight, packaging, and the like; or these specifications can be for conformance to a particular third-party requirement. This service ensures that volume meat, poultry and shell egg purchasers – such as hospitals, schools, restaurants, hotels, airlines and the military – receive products that comply with their unique specifications and contractual requirements.



## Marketing Benefits to Our Customers

- USDA Grading and certification services provide product or process information for buyers and consumers, and ensure that the products comply with U.S. Grade Standards, specifications, or purchasing and processing contracts.
- Through USDA Grading services, commodities can be traded on a uniform basis, coast-to-coast and overseas by buyers and sellers who use official USDA standards and grades.
- USDA standards and grades establish a uniform description of the commercial quality of products to determine value, utility, and price. For example, retailers and wholesalers and members of the hotel and restaurant industry use USDA grades as a value guideline and marketing tool.
- QAD services allow the establishment of fair, competitive bidding between suppliers, and a common language that enables buyers and sellers to communicate about product quality without actually seeing the product.
- We provide certification that the product meets the import requirements established by foreign government authorities. As well, Grading permits uniform marketing of certified meat, poultry and shell eggs for both export and domestic distribution through nutrition assistance programs.
- Grading services provide assurance of product quality on a continuous basis regardless of supplier.
- Our USDA Grading Services customers can use the USDA Grade Shield on product labels to assist in marketing their products, possibly for a higher value.

## Contact Us for More Information:

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