



**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**

Marketing and  
Regulatory  
Programs

Agricultural  
Marketing  
Service

Poultry  
Programs

# **United States Classes, Standards, and Grades for Rabbits**

**AMS 70.300 *et seq.***

**Effective September 5, 2002**

## FOREWORD

These classes, standards, and grades have been developed and are promulgated pursuant to the authorities contained in the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, as amended, (7 U.S.C. 1621 *et seq.*). The voluntary USDA rabbit grading program operates under these classes, standards, and grades as well as the rabbit grading regulations. The voluntary program provides for interested parties a national grading service based on official U.S. classes, standards, and grades for rabbits. The costs involved in furnishing this grading program are paid by the user of the service.

The grading program, regulations, classes, standards, and grades establish a basis for quality and price relationship and enable more orderly marketing. Consumers can purchase officially graded product with the confidence of receiving quality in accordance with the official identification.

The Regulations Governing the Voluntary Grading of Poultry Products and Rabbit Products are printed in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) as 7 CFR Part 70. The regulations are available over the Internet at [www.ams.usda.gov/poultry/regulations](http://www.ams.usda.gov/poultry/regulations).

The United States Classes, Standards, and Grades for Rabbits were removed from the CFR on December 4, 1995. They are maintained by the Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture as AMS 70.300 *et seq.* This document contains the classes, standards, and grades which are the most current to date. Past changes are enumerated in the bracketed footnotes following the applicable sections. The classes, standards, and grades are available over the Internet at [www.ams.usda.gov/poultry/standards](http://www.ams.usda.gov/poultry/standards).

For printed copies of the regulations or the standards, call (202) 720-3502, FAX (202) 690-0941, or write:

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Authority: 7 U.S.C. 1621-1627.

Source: 41 FR 23681, June 11, 1976, unless otherwise noted. Redesignated at 42 FR 32514, June 27, 1977, and at 46 FR 63203, Dec. 31, 1981. Amended at 67 FR 56527, Sept. 4, 2002.

## **United States Classes of Ready-to-Cook Rabbits**

### **§70.300 General.**

For the purpose of AMS §§70.300 through 70.302, the classes of ready-to-cook rabbits are fryer or young rabbit and roaster, steeper, or mature rabbit.

### **§70.301 Fryer or young rabbit.**

A fryer or young rabbit is a young rabbit carcass weighing not less than 1 1/2 pounds and rarely more than 3 1/2 pounds processed from a rabbit usually less than 12 weeks of age. The flesh of a fryer or young rabbit is tender and fine grained, and of a bright pearly pink color.

### **§70.302 Roaster, steeper, or mature rabbit.**

A roaster, steeper, or mature rabbit is a mature or old rabbit carcass of any weight, but usually over 4 pounds processed from a rabbit usually 6 months of age or older. The flesh of a roaster, steeper, or mature rabbit is more firm and coarse grained, and the muscle fiber is slightly darker in color and less tender, and the fat may be more creamy in color than that of a fryer or young rabbit.

## **United States Standards for Quality of Ready-to-Cook Rabbits**

### **§70.310 General.**

(a) The United States standards for quality contained in AMS §§70.320 through 70.322 are applicable to individual carcasses of ready-to-cook rabbits and parts as described in paragraph (e) of this section.

(b) Carcasses or parts found to be unsound, unwholesome, or unfit for food shall not be included in any of the quality designations specified in AMS §§70.320 through 70.322.

(c) In interpreting the respective requirements specified in AMS §§70.320 through 70.322 for A quality, B quality, and C quality, the intensity, aggregate area involved, quantity, and locations of:

- (1) deformities;
- (2) freedom from foreign material,
- (3) discolorations (whether or not caused by processing operations and flesh bruises), and cut and tears;
- (4) disjointed and broken bones; and
- (5) freezing defects, as such defects individually or in combination detract from the general appearance, shall be considered in determining the particular quality of an individual carcass or part.

(d) A ready-to-cook carcass which has a defect may be graded after the defective portion has been removed. The fact that a portion has been removed will not be considered in determining the quality of the balance of the carcass, if the remaining portion of the carcass is to be disjointed and packed as parts. Rabbit parts which have been properly cut as described in paragraph (e) of this section may be graded after they have been cut from the carcass, if the class is known and the parts are not misshapen, or have nearly the same appearance as prior to cutting from the carcass.

(e) The standards of quality are applicable to rabbit parts cut in the manner described in paragraphs (e) (1) through (5) of this section. Similar parts cut in a manner other than as described in paragraphs (e) (1) through (5) of this section may be grade identified only when approved by the Administrator upon his determination that the labeling for such parts accurately describes the product. Requests for such approval shall be made to the National Supervisor.

(1) "Forelegs" shall be removed by cutting straight across the backbone at the eighth or ninth thoracic vertebra. The legs are divided by a lengthwise cut along the backbone to produce two approximately equal halves.

(2) "Ribs" shall be removed by cutting straight across the backbone between the third and fourth lumbar vertebrae. The rib section is further divided by a lengthwise cut along the backbone.

(3) "Loin" is separated from the rump by cutting straight across the backbone between the sixth and seventh lumbar vertebrae. There is no further division of this part.

(4) "Rump" is separated from the hind legs by cutting on a straight line from the base of the tail to a point approximately 1/2 inch above the stifle joint. There is no further division of the rump.

(5) "Hind legs" need no further division after separation from the rump.

## **Standards for Quality of Ready-to-Cook Rabbits**

### **§70.320 A Quality.**

(a) *Conformation.* The carcass or part is free from deformities that detract from the appearance of the product, or that affect the normal distribution of flesh. Slight deformities may be present.

(b) *Fleshing.* The carcass or part has a well-developed covering of flesh considering the kind, class, and part. The flesh is thick, well rounded, and full. The muscle texture is firm.

(c) *Cuts and tears.*

(1) The carcass or part may have cuts and tears in the flesh, provided the maximum length of all cuts and tears does not exceed the length specified in the following table:

| Grade A                                       | Maximum aggregate area permitted |         |
|---|----------------------------------|---------|
|   | Carcass                          | Part    |
| Loin, Rump <sup>1</sup> , and Hind Legs ..... | 1/4 in. ....                     | 1/4 in. |
| Forelegs, Ribs, and Elsewhere.....            | 1/2 in. ....                     | 1/2 in. |

<sup>1</sup> A cut or tear 1/2 inch in length is permitted at the rump adjacent to the backbone.

(2) Cuts or tears, caused by skin removal that tears the thin outer tissue covering the flesh are permitted provided: they do not detract from the appearance of the product, and the cut or tear does not result in an indentation in the muscle tissue.

(d) *Disjointed and broken bones, and missing parts.*

(1) The carcass or part is free of crushed or shattered bones caused by the removal of the head and feet. The ends of leg bones may not be broken beyond the point where the muscle tissue begins.

(2) The carcass or part may have not more than one disjointed bone and is free of broken bones. No parts may be missing from the carcass.

(e) *Discolorations.* The requirements contained in this section are applicable to discolorations of the connective tissue and flesh of ready-to-cook rabbits as defined in the regulations 7 CFR §70.1.

(1) The carcass or part may have slight discolorations, provided the discolorations do not detract from the appearance of the product.

(2) The carcass or part may have lightly shaded areas of discolorations, provided the aggregate area of all discolorations does not exceed the area of a circle of the diameter specified in the following table:

| Grade A                            | Maximum aggregate area permitted |         |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------|
|                                    | Carcass                          | Part    |
| Loin, Rump, and Hind Legs .....    | 1 in. ....                       | 1/2 in. |
| Forelegs, Ribs, and Elsewhere..... | 2 in. ....                       | 3/4 in. |

(3) The carcass or part is free of moderately shaded discolorations, except that moderately shaded discolorations are permitted adjacent to the bone and must not exceed an area of a circle with a diameter of ¼ inch, and are free of blood clots.

(4) Evidence of incomplete bleeding, such as more than an occasional slight coagulation in a vein, is not permitted.

(f) *Freezing defects.* With respect to consumer packaged rabbit carcasses or parts, the carcass or part shall be practically free from defects that result from handling or occur during freezing or storage. The following defects are permitted if they, alone or in combination, detract only very slightly from the appearance of the carcass or part:

(1) Slight darkening of the meat provided that the frozen carcass or part has a generally bright appearance.

(2) Occasional dry areas on the outer layer of flesh.

(3) Occasional small areas showing a thin layer of clear or pinkish colored ice.

**§70.321 B Quality.**

(a) *Conformation.* The carcass or part is practically free of deformities. Moderate deformities may be present, which do not materially affect the normal distribution of flesh or detract from the appearance of the product.

(b) *Fleshing.* The carcass or part has a fairly well developed covering of flesh considering the kind, class, and part. The flesh is fairly thick, fairly well rounded, and fairly well fleshed. The muscle texture is fairly firm.

(c) *Cuts and tears.*

(1) The carcass or part may have cuts and tears in the flesh, provided the maximum length of all cuts and tears does not exceed the length specified in the following table:

| Grade B                                       | Maximum aggregate area permitted |         |
|---|----------------------------------|---------|
|   | Carcass                          | Part    |
| Loin, Rump <sup>1</sup> , and Hind Legs ..... | 1/2 in. ....                     | 1/2 in. |
| Forelegs, Ribs, and Elsewhere.....            | 1 in. ....                       | 1 in.   |

<sup>1</sup> A cut or tear 1 inch in length is permitted at the rump adjacent to the backbone.

(2) Cuts or tears, caused by skin removal that tears the thin outer tissue covering the flesh, are permitted provided: they detract only very slightly from the appearance of the product, and the cut or tear does not result in a significant indentation in the muscle tissue.

(d) *Disjointed and broken bones, and missing parts.*

(1) The carcass or part is free of crushed or shattered bones caused by the removal of the head and feet. The ends of leg bones may be broken beyond the point where the muscle tissue begins.

(2) The carcass may have not more than two disjointed and one broken bone. No parts may be missing.

(3) Parts may have not more than one disjointed bone and are free of broken bones.

(e) *Discolorations.*

(1) The carcass or part may have moderately shaded areas of discolorations, provided they are free of blood clots, and the aggregate area of all discolorations does not exceed the area of a circle having the diameter specified in the following table:

| Grade B                            | Maximum aggregate area permitted |           |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------|
|                                    | Carcass                          | Part      |
| Loin, Rump, and Hind Legs .....    | 2 in. ....                       | 1 in.     |
| Forelegs, Ribs, and Elsewhere..... | 3 in. ....                       | 1 1/2 in. |

(2) Evidence of incomplete bleeding shall be no more than slight.

(f) *Freezing defects.* With respect to consumer-packaged rabbits or parts, the carcass or part may have moderate defects resulting from handling or occurring during freezing or storage. The flesh shall have a sound appearance, but may lack brightness. A few dry areas on the outer flesh are permitted. Moderate areas showing layers of clear, pinkish, or reddish colored ice are permitted.

**§70.322 C Quality.**

A carcass or part does not meet the requirements for A or B quality may be C quality, provided the flesh is substantially intact and the carcass or part complies with the following:

(a) *Conformation.* The carcass or part may have pronounced deformities that detract from the appearance of the product, or affect the distribution of flesh.

(b) *Fleshing.* The carcass or part may have an under-developed covering of flesh considering the kind, class, and part. The muscle texture may be soft or flabby.

(c) *Cuts and tears.* The carcass or part may have cuts or tears in the flesh and those caused by skin removal in excess of B quality, provided that the normal meat yield is not materially affected and the flesh is substantially intact.

(d) *Disjointed and broken bones, and missing parts.*

(1) The carcass or part is free of crushed or shattered bones caused by the removal of the head. The ends of the leg bones may be shattered and broken beyond the point where the muscle tissue begins.

(2) The carcass may have disjointed bones and not more than five broken bones. No parts may be missing.

(3) Parts may have not more than one disjointed and one broken bone.

(e) *Discolorations.* The carcass or part may have shaded areas of discolorations that do not render the carcass or part unfit for food.

(f) *Freezing defects.* The carcass or part may have severe defects resulting from handling or occur during freezing or storage. The carcass or part may have large dried areas on the outer layer of flesh. No limit on the amount or color of ice is present.

### **United States Consumer Grades for Ready-to-Cook Rabbits**

#### **§70.330 U.S. Grade A.**

A lot of ready-to-cook rabbit carcasses or parts, consisting of one or more ready-to-cook carcasses or parts of the same kind and class, each of which conforms to the requirements for A quality as specified in this part, may be designated as U.S. Grade A.

#### **§70.331 U.S. Grade B.**

A lot of ready-to-cook rabbit carcasses or parts, consisting of one or more ready-to-cook carcasses or parts of the same kind and class, each of which conforms to the requirements for B quality as specified in this part, may be designated as U.S. Grade B.

#### **§70.332 U.S. Grade C.**

A lot of ready-to-cook rabbit carcasses or parts, consisting of one or more ready-to-cook carcasses or parts of the same kind and class, each of which conforms to the requirements for C quality as specified in this part, may be designated as U.S. Grade C.

[41 FR 2368, June 11, 1976. Redesignated at 42 FR 32514, June 27, 1977, and at 46 FR 63203, Dec. 3, 1981, and amended at 47 FR 46071, Oct. 15, 1982; 47 FR 54421, Dec. 3, 1982; 67 FR 56527, Sept. 4, 2002]

## Ready-to-Cook Rabbits

### Summary of Specifications for Standards of Quality for Individual Carcasses or Parts

Effective September 5, 2002

(Not All Inclusive -- Minimum Requirements and Maximum Defects Permitted)

|                                     | <b>A Quality</b>   |  | <b>B Quality</b>  |                            | <b>C Quality</b>  |                            |
|-------------------------------------|--|--|---|----------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| <b>Conformation:</b>                | Normal, slight deformities   |  | Moderate deformities  |                            | Pronounced deformities  |                            |
| <b>Fleshing:</b>                    | Thick, well rounded, and full – well fleshed considering kind and class  |  | Fairly thick, fairly well rounded - fairly well fleshed considering kind and class  |                            | Under-developed covering of flesh considering kind and class    |                            |
| Muscle texture                      | Firm   |  | Fairly firm   |                            | Soft or flabby  |                            |
| <b>Cuts and Tears:</b>              | <b>Carcass</b> <sup>1a</sup>   | <b>Parts</b> <sup>1a</sup>             | <b>Carcass</b> <sup>1b</sup>  | <b>Parts</b> <sup>1b</sup> | <b>Carcass</b>  | <b>Parts</b>               |
| Loin, Rump, Hind Legs               | 1/4 in.  | 1/4 in.                                | 1/2 in.   | 1/2 in.                    | No limit, provided meat yield is not materially affected        |                            |
| Forelegs, Ribs, Elsewhere           | 1/2 in.  | 1/2 in.                                | 1 in.   | 1 in.                      |   |                            |
| <b>Disjointed and Broken Bones:</b> | <b>Carcass</b> <sup>2a</sup>   | <b>Parts</b> <sup>2a</sup>             | <b>Carcass</b> <sup>2b</sup>  | <b>Parts</b> <sup>2b</sup> | <b>Carcass</b> <sup>2c</sup>                                    | <b>Parts</b> <sup>2c</sup> |
|                                     | 1 disjointed, no broken  | 1 disjointed, no broken                | 2 disjointed, 1 broken  | 1 disjointed, no broken    | No limit disjointed, 5 broken                                   | 1 disjointed, 1 broken     |
| <b>Missing Parts:</b>               | None   |  | None  |                            | None  |                            |
| <b>Discolorations:</b>              | <b>Lightly Shaded</b> <sup>3</sup>   | <b>Moderately Shaded</b> <sup>4a</sup> | <b>Moderately Shaded</b> <sup>4b</sup>  |                            | <b>Moderately Shaded</b>  |                            |
| <b>Carcasses</b>                    |  |  |   |                            |   |                            |
| Loin, Rump, Hind Legs               | 1 in.  | None                                   | 2 in.   |                            | No limit  |                            |
| Elsewhere                           | 2 in.  | None                                   | 3 in.   |                            |   |                            |
| <b>Discolorations:</b>              | <b>Lightly Shaded</b> <sup>3</sup>   | <b>Moderately Shaded</b> <sup>4a</sup> | <b>Moderately Shaded</b> <sup>4b</sup>  |                            | <b>Moderately Shaded</b>  |                            |
| <b>Parts</b>                        |  |  |   |                            |   |                            |
| Loin, Rump, Hind Legs               | 1/2 in.  | None                                   | 1 in.   |                            | No limit  |                            |
| Forelegs and Ribs                   | 3/4 in.  | None                                   | 1 1/2 in.   |                            |   |                            |
| <b>Trimming:</b>                    | Carcasses or parts may be graded after a defect has been removed.  |  |   |                            |   |                            |
| <b>Freezing Defects:</b>            | Slight darkening provided the carcass or part has a generally bright appearance. Occasional dry areas and small areas of clear or pinkish colored ice may be present |  | May lack brightness. A few dry areas and moderate areas with layers of clear, pinkish, or reddish colored ice may be present. |                            | Large dry areas and no limit on amount or color of ice present. |                            |

<sup>1a</sup> A cut or tear up to 1/2 in. in length is permitted at the rump adjacent to the backbone. Cuts or tears caused by skin removal are permitted provided they do not result in an indentation in the muscle tissue, and do not detract from the appearance of the product.

<sup>1b</sup> A cut or tear up to 1 in. in length is permitted at the rump adjacent to the backbone. Cuts or tears caused by skin removal are permitted provided they do not result in a significant indentation in the muscle tissue, and only very slightly detract from the appearance of the product.

<sup>2a</sup> The ends of leg bones may not be shattered or broken beyond the point where the muscle tissue begins.

<sup>2b</sup> The ends of leg bones may not be shattered, but may be broken beyond the point where the muscle tissue begins.

<sup>2c</sup> The ends of leg bones may be shattered and broken beyond the point where the muscle tissue begins.

<sup>3</sup> Evidence of incomplete bleeding, such as more than an occasional slight coagulation in a vein, is not permitted.

<sup>4a</sup> Areas adjacent to the bone may have moderate discolorations, provided they do not exceed an aggregate area of 1/4 in. and are free of blood clots.

<sup>4b</sup> Evidence of incomplete bleeding shall be no more than slight. Discolorations shall be free of blood clots.