



MEAT EDUCATION



MEAT QUALITY

At time of fabrication, a healthy hog will produce pork that is reddish/pink indicating the animal was healthy and well cared for prior to slaughter.

PORK GRADING SYSTEM

YIELD GRADE

An estimate of the percent yield for the four primal cuts of sheep and goats: leg, loin, rack and shoulder (also referred to as cutability).

QUALITY GRADE

An important factor in consumer satisfaction. Color and texture affect meat palatability, flavor, and juiciness.



USDA YIELD GRADING

There are five yield grades 1 - 4 and utility, which is only used for carcasses that have undesirable quality factors. The numerical yield grades are given based on the expected yield from four lean cuts on the pork carcass.

Three factors are used to estimate the amount of lean meat a carcass will yield:

1. **HCW** – Hot Carcass Weight
2. **LEA** – Loin Eye Area
3. **Fat Depth/Cover** over the Ribeye

MUSCLING + FAT

The swine grading system uses muscling scores and back fat thickness to determine USDA Grades. Barrow, gilt, sow, boar, and stag are the harvest swine carcass classes. Barrows and gilts are classed together with grade standards.

Sows have different grade standards. Boars and stags are not commonly used in major swine carcass production because the boar flavor is unacceptable for grading; therefore, no official grade standards exist for boars or stags.

The whole carcass and the loin eye area are used to determine the muscling score. The area between the 10th and 11th rib is used to measure carcass muscle.

MUSCLING CATEGORIES:

1. **Thin/Inferior**
2. **Average**
3. **Thick/Superior**

Pork YIELD GRADES are calculated using the following equation:

$$4.0 \times \text{LAST RIB BACK FAT (inches)} - 1.0 \times \text{MUSCLE SCORE}$$

Muscle score is as follows:

Thin = 1.0, Average = 2.0 and Thick = 3.0

USDA QUALITY GRADING

The USDA does not grade pork for quality grades because market hogs are bred to produce uniformly tender meat. Instead, pork is listed as either acceptable or unacceptable based on color, appearance and marbling:

ACCEPTABLE - OR - UNACCEPTABLE

Acceptable – reddish/pink, fine marbling and firm lean

Unacceptable – pale, soft and exudative (PSE) or dark, very firm and dry lean

This quality is determined by viewing the cut surface of the loin at the 10th rib based on color, appearance and marbling.