



# MEAT EDUCATION



## MEAT QUALITY

During fabrication, a healthy sheep or goat produces meat that is light pink to red indicating the animal was healthy prior to slaughter.

## SHEEP + GOAT 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.



## SHEEP YIELD GRADING

To describe the amount of boneless, high quality meat from a carcass, the USDA gives each carcass a yield grade. **YG1** is the highest and **YG5** is the lowest.

### Sheep are classified by sex and maturity:

Young lamb carcasses (2 to 14 months of age) have a characteristic break joint on one of their shanks after the front legs are removed. On mutton carcasses, these break joints

have ossified. Yearling mutton carcasses (12 to 15 months of age) differ from traditional mutton by the color of the lean meat (pinkish red to dark red) and shape of the rib bones.

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**Sheep YIELD GRADES** are calculated using the following equation:

$$(\text{BACK FAT} \times 10) + 0.4$$

For example, if a sheep carcass had 0.20 inches of back fat, the yield grade would equal  $(0.20 \times 10 = 2.0) + 0.4 =$  yield grade of 2.4.

## SHEEP QUALITY GRADING

Determined by maturity, conformation, and flank streaking.

**Maturity** is determined by bone color and shape and lean color.

**Conformation** of a carcass is the overall thickness of the muscling. Lamb carcasses are not ribbed; therefore, the rib-eye areas are not exposed and cannot be used for an overall evaluation of marbling.

**Flank streaking** is used to predict marbling in a lamb carcass. The streaks of fat in the flank muscle are used to determine marbling.

USDA  
PRIME

HIGHEST

USDA  
CHOICE

USDA  
GOOD

USDA  
UTILITY

LOWEST

## GOAT YIELD + QUALITY GRADING

Goat meat is known for being very lean, containing little marbling and minimal subcutaneous fat. There are no official USDA yield or quality grades for goat meat.

Despite the lack of official USDA grades, there are three general quality grading standards for goats based primarily on muscling and lack of subcutaneous fat:

**SELECTION 1:** Heavily Muscled

**SELECTION 2:** Moderately Muscled

**SELECTION 3:** Poorly Muscled