



United States Department of Agriculture
Marketing and Regulatory Programs
Agricultural Marketing Service
Livestock and Seed Program
Meat Grading & Certification Branch

Instruction 909
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CALIBRATING THERMOMETERS

Policy

Meat graders and supervisors will ensure all thermometers are calibrated regularly. Thermometers will be calibrated when they are first used and at least once each week while they are in use. Thermometers are also to be calibrated when:

1. Product is rejected based on thermometer readings, and the thermometer has not been calibrated that day.
2. There is any reason to suspect readings may be in error.
3. Requested by applicant or financially interested party.

Procedure

1. Fill container with ice and water and stir for 2 minutes.
2. Cover container with piece of cardboard. Insert thermometer through cardboard with majority of thermometer stem completely immersed in ice bath without touching any part of container.
3. Take reading after 3 minutes. If necessary, adjust the thermometer to read 32° F. Return digital thermometers or any other thermometers that cannot be calibrated to the Office of Field Operations and order a replacement.

NOTE: Mishandling can impair a thermometer's accuracy. Handle thermometers with care, and use only to take temperatures. Keep thermometers in their cases when not in use. Carefully clean thermometers before storing. Only expose thermometers to temperatures within range shown on dial. Do not force into or out of frozen items. Drill pilot holes in frozen products using drill bits sufficiently larger than thermometer's stem to allow easy insertion and removal. Do not turn head of thermometer when inserting it into or removing it from product.

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