



**Agricultural
Marketing
Service**

**Office of the
Deputy Administrator
Livestock and Seed Program**

**1400 Independence Avenue, SW.
Room 2092-S, STOP 0249
Washington, DC 20250-0249**

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NOTICE TO THE TRADE

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) REQUESTS COMMENTS ON A PILOT PROJECT TO DETERMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF ELECTRONIC INSTRUMENT GRADING SYSTEMS FOR PREDICTION OF YIELD (CUTABILITY) AND QUALITY GRADE DETERMINATIONS OF LAMB CARCASSES

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is proposing a pilot project to assess the feasibility in using an approved instrument grading system for augmenting official USDA yield (cutability) and quality grade determinations of lamb carcasses. The instrument grading system will examine carcasses prior to chilling. A team of USDA Grading and Verification Division employees and university scientists will evaluate effectiveness and feasibility.

Interested parties are encouraged to review the proposed protocol and provide comments to AMS. The proposed pilot project protocol can be accessed at:

<http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/PublicationsInstrumentGradingSystems>.

USDA's lamb grading service provides third-party lamb carcass evaluation to segregate a large and diverse population into smaller, more similar groups (grades) that are utilized to determine price/value used by both buyers and sellers of lamb. It is essential that USDA take all reasonable steps, including the adoption of new technology, to ensure the most accurate and consistent grading decisions on a nationwide basis.

The instrument performance standards for lamb carcass yield (cutability) and quality grade assessment were established in consultation with an industry working group consisting of members from the American Sheep Industry Association, packing companies, producers, instrument manufacturers, other Government agencies, and academia. USDA has previously established standards for instrument grading systems for predicting beef ribeye area (a component of the yield grade standard), yield grade, and marbling score in 2003, 2005, and 2006, respectively.

For further information, please contact Martin E. O'Connor, USDA, AMS, Livestock and Seed Program, Room 2607-S, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, D.C. 20250-0254 or at (202) 260-8295. Comments may be sent to the above mailing address, by facsimile to (202) 720-1112, or by electronic mail to martin.oconnor@ams.usda.gov and must be received on or before April 1, 2012.

for Craig A. Morris
Deputy Administrator
Livestock and Seed Program