



# **HANDBOOK OF AUSTRALIAN SHEEPMEAT PROCESSING**

**THE AUS-MEAT LANGUAGE**

**2021 Edition**

# HANDBOOK OF AUSTRALIAN SHEEPMEAT PROCESSING

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# — AUSTRALIA'S SHEEPMEAT — INDUSTRY



Australia is the world's largest exporter of sheepmeat, and is the world's second largest producer of lamb and mutton. The off-farm meat value (domestic expenditure plus export value, including live export) of the Australian sheepmeat industry was approximately \$7.2 billion in 2019 up 24% on the 2018 period (MLA estimate).

## *Fast Facts*

- Australian national sheep numbers total 65.8 million as at June 2019
- 37.8 million breeding ewes one-year and older as at 30 June 2019 (MLA State of the Industry Report - 2020)
- There are 17,700 Australian farms producing at least 200 lambs for slaughter (ABARES)
- In 2019, Australia produced 503,146 tonnes carcass weight (cwt) of lamb and 228,135 tonnes cwt of mutton (MLA State of the Industry Report – 2020).
- Total sheepmeat production (lamb and mutton) was 731,281 tonnes cwt in 2019, just below year-ago levels, yet 3% above the five-year average (MLA State of the Industry Report – 2020).
- Australia accounted for around 7% of global sheepmeat production in 2019 (MLA State of the Industry Report – 2020).
- Australia continues to be one of the largest per capita consumers of sheepmeat in the world. In 2019, Australians consumed approximately 6.8kg of sheepmeat per person (MLA State of the Industry Report – 2020).
- Australia is the largest exporter of sheepmeat in the world (MLA State of the Industry Report – 2020).
- In 2019, Australia's top three sheepmeat (lamb and mutton) export destinations (in volume terms) were China (152,683 tonnes swt, or 32.8% of total exports), the US (76,240 tonnes swt, or 16.4% of total exports) and UAE (26,913 tonnes swt, or 5.8% of total exports) (MLA State of the Industry Report – 2020).

*The above figures quoted come courtesy of the Sheep Industry Fast Facts supplied by Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA). For further information visit: [www.mla.com.au](http://www.mla.com.au)*

# AUS-MEAT



## INDUSTRY OWNERSHIP

AUS-MEAT Limited is an industry owned company operating as a joint venture between Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA) and the Australian Meat Processor Corporation (AMPC). AUS-MEAT runs efficient, disciplined business practices operating under internationally recognised quality management systems.

In 1998, AUS-MEAT was corporatized as a separate entity as part of a major restructure of industry bodies. It now operates as a non-profit company limited by guarantee that is wholly owned by its member bodies, MLA and AMPC. AUS-MEAT is cited as the 'standards body' responsible for setting standards for meat for export under the Export Control Act 2020.

A Letter of Exchange (LoE) confirms the arrangements between The Department and AUS-MEAT for the verification of trade description requirements under the Export Control Act 2020 and the Export Control (Meat and Meat Products) Rules 2021. The principle objectives of AUS-MEAT relevant to this LoE are the management of industry standards for trade description through the Australian Meat Industry Classification System (AUS-MEAT Language) and the AUS-MEAT National Accreditation Standards for accredited enterprises. The core objectives have remained unchanged since its inception in 1987.

AUS-MEAT's industry ownership is a key feature of the co regulatory partnership between government and industry which is implemented through the Australian Meat Industry Language and Standards Committee convened by AUS-MEAT.



## *AUS-MEAT LANGUAGE AND STANDARDS*

AUS-MEAT develops, maintains and reviews accreditation standards through the Australian Meat Industry Language and Standards Committee (AMILSC). The AMILSC is responsible for setting the standards for the Australian Meat Industry. The standards are designed to protect the reputation of AUS-MEAT, the integrity of the AUS-MEAT Language and the interests of the Australian industry in relation to the sale, distribution and export of Australian Meat and Livestock.

The AUS-MEAT Language is a common language which uses objective descriptions to describe meat products accurately to meet market requirements both nationally and internationally. The AUS-MEAT Language objective descriptions are for use by the producer on the land, meat processors, boning rooms, wholesalers and food service organisations. The Language has been adopted throughout the Australian Meat Industry and provides customers with an accurate way of ordering meat products.

The Language includes the Australian Beef Carcase Evaluation scheme (chiller assessment) and has been integrated within the Meat Standards Australia (MSA) grading system where common measurements / assessments are used.

Changes to the Language are progressed through the consultative process with industry stakeholders and final approval and implementation comes from the AMILSC.



# INDUSTRY STRUCTURE

## Industry Ownership

Standards Funding & Corporate Governance

## Industry Certification Program

Secretariat Services / Technical Advice & Information

## Regulatory Interface

Australian Government  
Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment  
LoE / Approved Arrangements

### Members

- AUS-MEAT Chairman and CEO
- Australian Meat Industry Council
- Australian Lot Feeders' Association
- Cattle Council of Australia

### Members

- Sheep Producers of Australia
- Australian Supermarkets (Retail Council)
- Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

## AUSTRALIAN MEAT INDUSTRY LANGUAGE AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Subcommittees

Animal Welfare      Retail Language

### Industry Standards

- AUS-MEAT National Accreditation Standards
- AUS-MEAT Language
- Domestic Retail Beef Register
- Animal Raising Claims



### Certification Systems

Recognition of Industry Standards, Certification Requirements, Databases and Registers, Verification / Audit Requirements, Approved Auditors, Reporting, Sanctions, Policies



Verification / Audit Activities



## Accreditation Programs

AUS-MEAT offers accreditation programs for meat processing facilities including abattoirs and boning rooms.

All export abattoirs and boning rooms must be accredited by AUS-MEAT under federal legislation. Establishments wishing to be accredited by AUS-MEAT must implement an AUS-MEAT approved quality management system designed to ensure consistency of quality and accurate product description.

## Auditing Services

AUS-MEAT offers accreditation programs for abattoirs, boning rooms (Packer Enterprises) and meat traders, referred to as Non Packer Exporters (NPE's). Each accreditation type is underpinned by the industry owned National Accreditation Standards.

The Packer Enterprise accreditation program covers Export and Domestic enterprises – Abattoirs, Boning Rooms and Further Processors (e.g. Smallgoods). Accreditation is progressed through internationally recognised quality management principles and best practice methods.

Other accreditation programs (e.g. Livestock) are administered by AUS-MEAT on behalf of industry owners.

## Training Services

AUS-MEAT Training services are provided to comply with industry standards to ensure trained personnel implement correct use of the AUS-MEAT Language and accurate product description terminology is applied to all meat products.

AUS-MEAT's status as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) ensures training courses comply with training and assessment standards under the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF).

## Other Certification Services

Whilst AUS-MEAT's charter is to provide services to the meat and livestock industry, business diversification and growth led to the formation of AUS-QUAL Pty Ltd, a subsidiary company of AUS-MEAT, providing services to the agriculture, horticulture and plant production and processing industries.

See further information: [www.ausqual.com.au](http://www.ausqual.com.au)



# — OVER-*THE-HOOKS* — TRADING



## *What is Over-The-Hooks (OTH) trading*

OTH trading is the direct selling of livestock to a processor, where payment is based on Hot Standard Carcase Weight (HSCW)

## *Benefits of OTH trading*

OTH trading offers a number of significant benefits to both producers and processors, including:

- by providing feedback directly to the producer on carcase performance, enabling a better understanding of market requirements and signals.
- Direct delivery to the processor reduces damage to carcasses caused by bruising and reducing meat quality problems caused by stress; and
- providing a true reflection of the "real worth" of a carcase

## *Payment in OTH trading*

Payment for livestock is generally based on a cents per kilogram price multiplied by the HSCW.

In some instances final determination of price is not possible until carcase quality characteristics have been assessed. Where carcase quality characteristics or other factors are used to determine price, the buyer and vendor would normally have agreed on the payment criteria at the time the agreement is made between the vendor and the buyer.

The vendor and the buyer would normally have agreed on the period between slaughter and payment.





## Pricing Systems

Australian processors use a number of different methods when purchasing sheep for slaughter. These may include

- Dollar per head transaction, used by saleyards and for paddock sales
- Over-The-Hooks trading as previously discussed

Where meat processors purchase sheep OTH the price will be based on a price grid. The grid indicates by price, which are the most desirable animals and shows discounts for animals not meeting the ideal specifications.

Some grids offer higher premiums but may also have larger discounts for animals falling outside the ideal specification. Others may be wider and easier to fit more sheep into resulting in a better average price.

To assess which price grid is going to give you the highest return and to match livestock to specifications it is necessary for a producer to accurately assess sheep for live weight, expected dressed weight, sex, dentition and fat score.

A grid is a good example of value-based trading where products, in this case, carcasses are priced according to objective measurements of what is valued by the customer. The more accurately a product can be identified, measured and priced according to its value for a particular market, the higher the degree of value-based payment. Whether breeding or trading sheep, good records and more accurate value-based trading will reveal which sheep are most valuable and where they have come from. Perhaps one of the greatest difficulties of value-based trading and interpreting feedback is tracing individual animal records on the property and obtaining feedback from buyers that can be matched to the specific animal.

It is necessary in today's environment that producers understand and select the market/s that suit their production system. Like any business they must get to know their customer, target their production to meet their customers specifications. Where a producer consistently achieves a high level of compliance to a required specification they will likely receive price premiums and be sought by all the processors supplying that market.







# — SLAUGHTER FLOOR — LANGUAGE



## What is AUS-MEAT Slaughter Floor Language

The AUS-MEAT Slaughter Floor Language is a trading language used to objectively describe meat and livestock. The Language is used throughout Australia and it is mandatory that all product leaving Australia is described using the AUS-MEAT Language.

Any Meat Company ANY Road Any state		AUSTRALIA 9999 INSPECTED	Net HSCW <b>16.5 kg</b>	<b>LAMB</b>	Body No: <b>9656</b>
PRODUCT OF AUSTRALIA Keep Chilled Est No: 9999		(01)99312345678900(3101)001235(11)020729(21)1249656 Oper Sex Dent Fat S. Lot Kill Date: GRADE AB34 M 0 3 45 29-FEB-15 AA3			

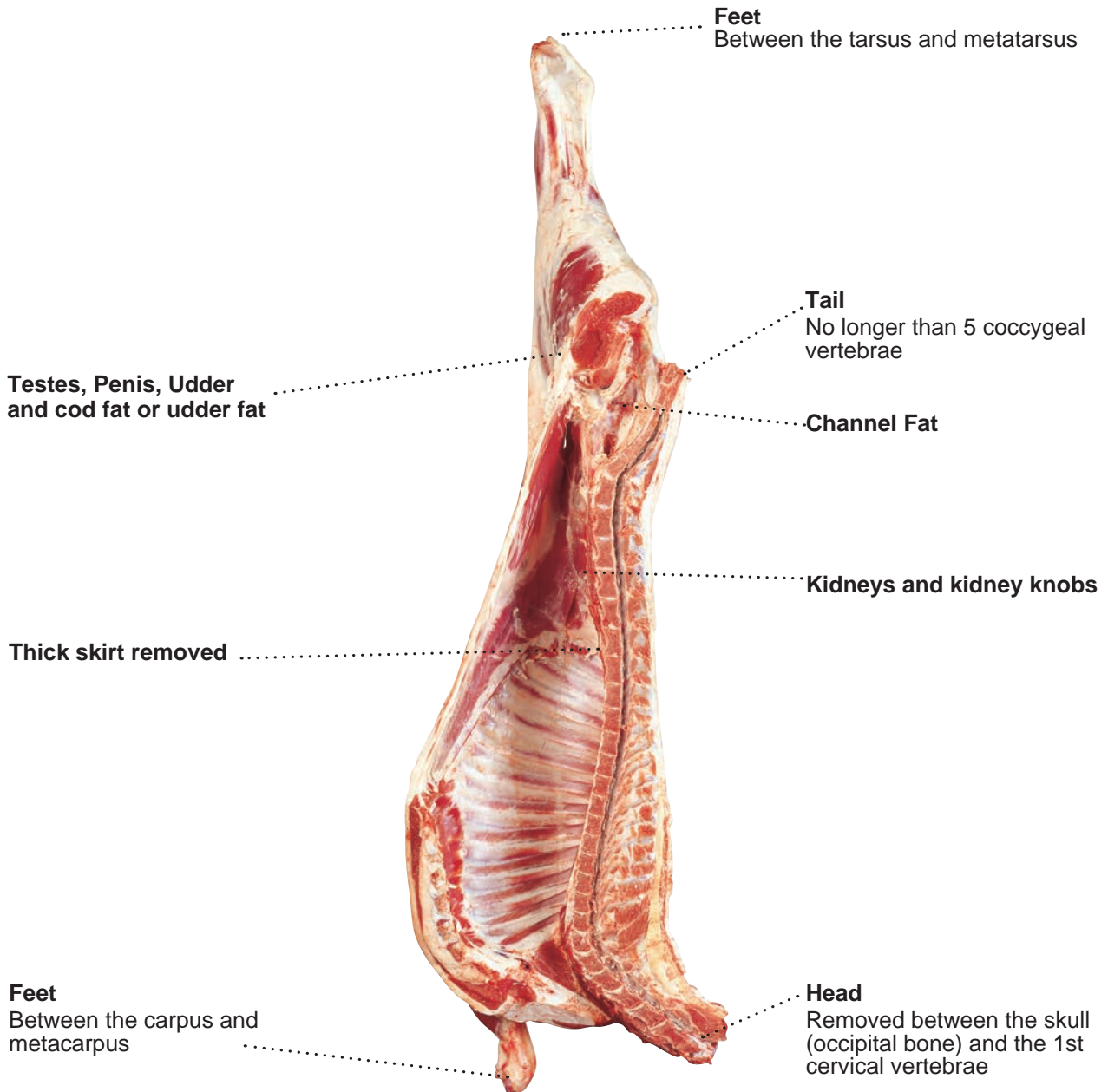
### AUS-MEAT Slaughter Floor Language characteristics

- |   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. Hot Standard Carcase Weight (HSCW)     | 4. Dentition                  |
| 2. Sheepmeat Category (sex and dentition) | 5. Fat Score   Fat Depth (mm) |
| 3. Sex (male/female)                      |                               |



## AUS-MEAT Standard Carcase Trim

**Trimming is limited to the removal of:**



The AUS-MEAT Standard Carcase applies to all Over-the-Hooks trading in AUS-MEAT accredited processing facilities, unless a variation is agreed to by the producer / processor involved. In this case, the trim can not go beyond the Standard Carcase definition.

## Definition of an AUS-MEAT Standard Carcass



***A sheepmeat carcass is the body of a slaughtered ovine animal after:***

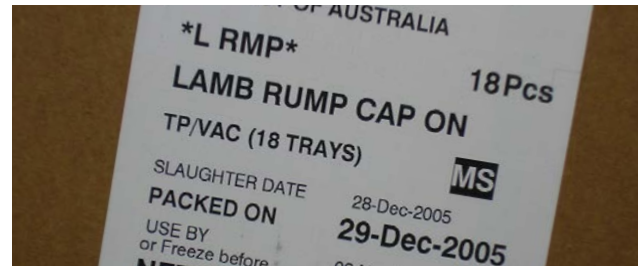
- Bleeding
- Skinning
- Removal of all the internal digestive, respiratory, excretory, reproductive and circulatory organs
- Minimum trimming as required by the meat inspection service for the carcass to be passed fit for human consumption
- Trimming of the neck and neck region may be extended to ensure compliance with 'Zero Tolerance' for ingesta contamination especially where Halal slaughter has been performed. This extension to the Standard Carcass Trim is limited to a hygiene trim but may include complete removal of the 1st cervical vertebrae. This process must be controlled by the Company's Approved Arrangement

***and the removal of:***

- head between the skull (occipital bone) and the first cervical vertebra
- feet between the knee joint (carpus and metacarpus) and the hock joint (tarsus and metatarsus)
- tail so that it is no longer than five coccygeal vertebrae
- thick skirt by separating the connective tissues as close as possible from the bodies of the lumbar vertebrae
- kidneys, kidney knob and the pelvic channel fat
- udder, or the testes, penis and udder or cod fat

***The carcass must be weighed hot (HSCW).***

## Identifying carcass sex



### Why identify carcass sex

In sheepmeat carcasses the accurate identification of sex and sexual maturity is important for five main reasons:

#### 1. Rams must be identified:

- They are in a separate category.

#### 2. Customer Service:

- If the vendor or buyer has requested that sex be recorded, it is their right to expect that it will be recorded accurately as they usually know how many castrate males, females and entire males are in their lot.

#### 3. Accuracy of documentation on:

- Feedback sheets
- Carcass ticket

#### 4. Eligibility for certain categories:

- Only castrate males without SSC's can be placed in the hogget categories.

#### 5. Price determination:

- Some processors have a preference for carcasses of either sex
- Product associated with ram carcasses may attract a discount on the Australian domestic market.
- Males with Secondary Sexual Characteristics are usually valued differently.

### Determining Secondary Sexual Characteristics (SSC)

SSC's are the features of a male carcass which indicate the level of sexual maturity that has been reached. It is important to assess SSC's as this will help to determine the correct Basic or Alternative Category of the carcass.

Features of a male or ram carcass include

- A thickened pizzle
- Prominent erector muscle
- Prominent bulbo-urethral gland
- Lumpy and irregular cod fat

The assessment of SSC's is the primary determination of the Ram Category. The Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment have day to day responsibility to ensure SSC determination is completed under the Approved Arrangement for Export processing Establishments.



## Dentition



### Why measure dentition

In the AUS-MEAT Language, dentition is used as a measure of approximate age in order to determine both basic and alternative categories for sheepmeat. This is based on the number of permanent incisors that have erupted (that is, zero, one, two or eight teeth)

The tooth assessment method of ageing sheep involves assessing the time of appearance and the degree of wear on the temporary and permanent teeth. The temporary or milk teeth, are easily distinguished from the permanent teeth by their smaller size and whiter colour.

At maturity sheep have a total of 32 teeth, eight (8) of which are permanent incisors on the lower jaw (biting teeth), these are the teeth assessed when determining a dentition score.

Molar teeth may be checked where:

- It is unsure if the erupted incisor teeth are milk teeth or permanent incisor teeth.
- Young lamb will only have premolars (tricuspid), while older animals will have permanent molars (bicuspid) on the upper jaw.

Dentition is assessed on the slaughter floor while there is still a direct correlation between the head and the carcass.

### What effects dentition assessment

Times at which teeth erupt will vary. Breed and nutrition have an effect on how early or late teeth are cut. i.e. Some breeds may mature earlier therefore cut their teeth at an earlier age.

Sheep under rough feed conditions, i.e. feedlots and drought affected will wear their teeth at a much faster rate.



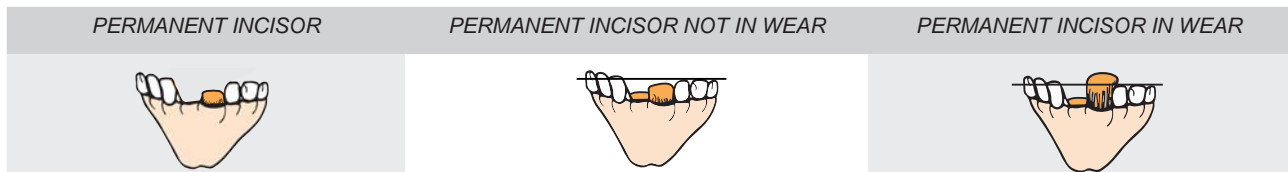
## Definitions of Permanent Incisors

A permanent incisor is defined as:

- New incisor that has broken (erupted) through the gum surface
- Permanent incisors are used to determine age in animals

A permanent incisor is considered 'in wear' if:

- It touches the upper pad when the sheep's mouth is closed
- It is above the height of the lamb's milk teeth either side of the permanent incisors.



*Zero (0) Teeth (milktooth)*



*Permanent Incisor not in wear*



*Permanent Incisor in wear - Two (2) Teeth*



*Eight (8) Teeth*

## Advanced Carcase Fat Measurement (GR)



### Measuring GR fat depth

Measuring **GR** fat depth applies to any AUS-MEAT accredited processor that employs certified staff, and in particular companies where Over-the-Hooks traded sheep are processed.

Processors that pay and trade on the basis of carcase fat measurement need highly trained and skilled measurers to ensure that carcase fat depth is accurately recorded.

### Why measure fat depth

The two key factors in determining the value of a carcase are:

1. **Market destination, and**
2. **The yield of saleable meat from the carcase.**

The suitability of a carcase for a particular market will be determined by consumer preferences in that market. The **GR** measurement is one objective measurement that is used to determine the destination of the carcase.

A carcase which yields a higher percentage of saleable meat is generally more valuable.

An accurate measurement of carcase fat depth will indicate the yield of the carcase and its suitability for a particular market. Research results support this claim and indicate that **GR** measurements can provide useful data for plant management, the producer and the end-user. This information is used, not only as a means of determining payment to producers, but also as a management tool for the processor and producer.

### Why have the GR site

A national carcase fat measurement site makes a lot of sense for the following reasons:

It provides objective producer feedback that can be compared between meatworks and mobs of sheep or lambs. Feedback aids livestock production management.

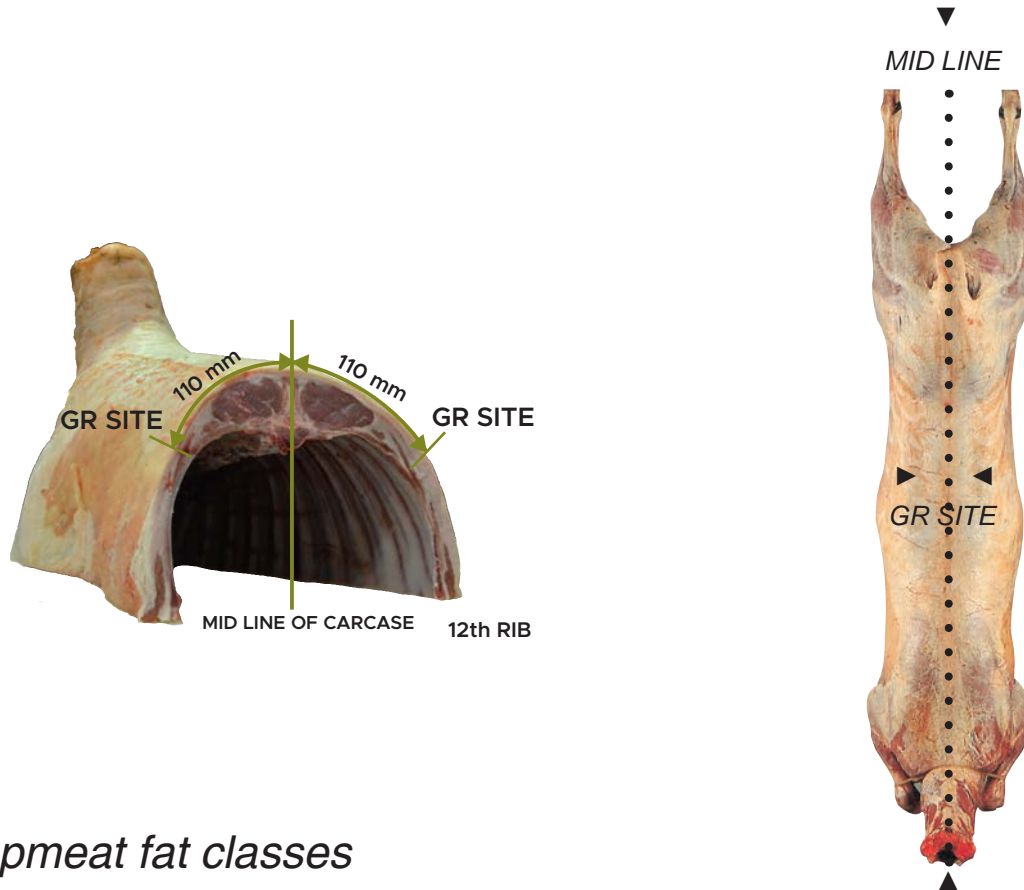
- It provides a reliable indicator to abattoir management of the market suitability and the saleable meat yield of carcasses.
- It provides an objective basis for establishing the prices paid for stock purchased 'over the hooks'.
- It provides livestock buyers with an objective yardstick to compare their live animal assessment.
- It provides carcase buyers with an objective means of specifying the desired fat depth range.



## Definition of the GR site

The **GR** site is a point defined by the following description:

**The GR site is located 110 mm from the mid-line of the carcass along the lateral surface of the 12th rib on either side of the carcass.**



## Sheepmeat fat classes

**Class 1**



GR  
Up to 5mm

**Class 2**



GR  
Over 5mm  
up to 10mm

**Class 3**



GR  
Over 10mm  
up to 15mm

**Class 4**



GR  
Over 15mm  
up to 20mm

**Class 5**



GR  
Over 20mm

## Identifying carcass category descriptions by dentition



Category is an objective way of describing a carcass for the purposes of trading sheepmeat products. It provides a system for the Australian meat industry to trade products both nationally and internationally.




Categories give a measure of sex, age.

This allows for a simplified system for carcasses to be boned out and cuts labelled according to the unique category of each carcass presented for boning.

There are two main groups of category – **Basic** and **Alternative**.

There are three (3) **Basic** categories and four (4) **Alternative** (optional) categories for sheepmeat.





### SHEEPMATE - BASIC CATEGORIES (LAMB / MUTTON / RAM)

DENTITION	DESCRIPTION	CATEGORY / CIPHER
<p>0</p> 	<p><b>LAMB</b> means meat derived from an ovine animal that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• (a) is under 12 months of age; or</li> <li>• (b) does not have any permanent incisor teeth in wear.</li> </ul> <p><b>Grain Fed Lamb (Symbol GF)</b></p>	<p><b>LAMB * L *</b> * 12 months (approx.)</p>
<p>1 - 8</p> 	<p><b>MUTTON</b> means meat derived from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a female ovine animal that has at least one (1) permanent incisor tooth in wear; or</li> <li>• a castrated male ovine animal that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has at least one (1) permanent incisor tooth in wear; and</li> <li>• shows no evidence of secondary sexual characteristics</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>MUTTON</b> * M * * Over 10 months</p>
<p>1 - 8</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>RAM</b> means meat derived from:</li> <li>• an entire male ovine animal that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• has at least one (1) permanent incisor tooth in wear; or</li> <li>• shows evidence of secondary sexual characteristics; or</li> <li>• a castrated male ovine animal that shows evidence of secondary sexual characteristics</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>RAM * R *</b> * Over 10 months</p>

\* Chronological age as shown is approximate only

# SHEEPMEAT - ALTERNATIVE CATEGORIES (SHEEP)



DENTITION	DESCRIPTION	CATEGORY / CIPHER
<p>0</p> 	<p><b>YOUNG LAMB</b> means a young <b>female or castrate male</b> ovine that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has 0 permanent incisor teeth (In addition)</li> <li>• Has no eruption of permanent upper molar teeth</li> </ul> <p><b>Milk Fed Lamb (Symbol MF)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lamb that has not been weaned. Younger than 8 weeks</li> </ul>	<p><b>YOUNG LAMB</b> * YL * * Up to 5 months only</p>
<p>1 - 2</p> 	<p><b>HOGGET</b> means meat derived from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A female or castrate male ovine animal that has one (1) but no more than two (2) permanent incisor teeth in wear; and</li> <li>• In males shows no evidence of secondary sexual characteristics.</li> </ul>	<p><b>HOGGET * H * OR YEARLING MUTTON YEARLING SHEEP MEAT</b> * 10 to 18 months</p>
<p>1 - 8</p> 	<p><b>EWE</b> means meat derived from a female ovine animal that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has at least one (1) permanent incisor tooth in wear:</li> </ul>	<p><b>EWE MUTTON</b> * E * * Over 10 months</p>
<p>1 - 8</p> 	<p><b>WETHER</b> means meat derived from a castrate male ovine animal that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has at least one (1) permanent incisor tooth in wear; and</li> <li>• Shows no evidence of secondary sexual characteristics.</li> </ul>	<p><b>WETHER MUTTON</b> * W * * Over 10 months</p>

\* Chronological age as shown is approximate only





# — GRAIN *FED* —

## LAMB AND HOGGET



The Livestock Production Accreditation Scheme (LPAS) administers the certification and specification requirements for Grain Fed Lamb and Hogget. All Grain Fed lambs and hoggets must be sourced from a Livestock Production System that is accredited by AUS-MEAT Limited under the LPAS for Grain Fed Lamb and Hogget and must comply with the following feeding and carcass criteria.

### *Eligibility criteria*

#### GRAIN FED LAMB

SYMBOL - GF



#### **Lamb category only**

- **Number of days on feed:** 35 days
- **Minimum Fat Class:** 2 (>5mm)
- **Minimum Weight Class:** 18 (>16kg)

The lambs must have been fed for not less than 35 days on a ration containing a Metabolisable Energy (ME) content of not less than 10 megajoules (MJ) of ME per kg of dry matter and a crude protein (CP) content of not less than 12%

#### GRAIN FED HOGGET

SYMBOL - GF



#### **Hogget category only**

- **Number of days on feed:** 35 days
- **Minimum Fat Class:** 2 (>5mm)
- **Minimum Weight Class:** 20 (>18kg)

The Hoggets must have been fed for not less than 35 days on a ration containing a Metabolisable Energy (ME) content of not less than 10 megajoules (MJ) of ME per kg of dry matter and a crude protein (CP) content of not less than 12%



# — MEAT STANDARDS —

## AUSTRALIA



Meat Standards Australia (MSA) is a valuable asset to the Australian sheepmeat industry, providing opportunities to differentiate products in the market. MSA sheepmeat is an optional supply chain management program designed to improve the eating quality of all sheepmeat categories (lamb, hogget and mutton). A complex series of factors which all affect the eating quality of sheepmeat are taken into account during the production process. This solves the long-standing consumer problem of selecting sheepmeat and choosing an appropriate cooking method. In 1997, an Australia-wide audit of retail lamb showed that 20% of loins were unacceptably tough. Today consumers expect quality – attributes such as flavour, juiciness, tenderness and overall liking should not fall below a minimum value. In 2000, MLA, with the support of research partners and the industry, designed a Sheepmeat eating Quality (SMeQ) research program to define best practice procedures through the identification of critical control points for eating quality. This research covered all aspects of the supply chain on behalf of producers, processors, retailers and foodservice operators. The results provided tools to monitor and improve product quality and match customer requirements in a practical and cost-effective way.

### *Carcase eligibility criteria*

<i>Category</i>	<i>Dentition</i>	<i>Approximate Age</i>	<i>HSCW (kgs)</i>	<i>Fat Score</i>	<i>GR (mm)</i>
Sucker lamb (milk fed) or Young Lamb *YL*	0	Up to 5 months	≥ 16kg	≥ 2	≥ 6
Lamb *L*	0 Not in wear	12 months	≥ 18kg	≥ 2	≥ 6
Hogget *H*	1-2	10-18 months	≥ 18kg	≥ 2	≥ 6
Mutton *M*, *W*, *E*	> 1	Over 10 months	≥ 18kg	≥ 2	≥ 6



# — TRADING — LANGUAGE



The AUS-MEAT Language is a common language which uses objective description to describe meat products accurately to meet market requirements both nationally and internationally. For a boning room intending to export meat under the Export Control Rules states that all Export abattoirs and boning rooms must hold AUS-MEAT Accreditation.

The principle objective of AUS-MEAT in this case is the management of industry standards for trade description through the AUS-MEAT Language and the AUS-MEAT *National Accreditation Standards*. The Standards are designed to protect the integrity of the AUS-MEAT Language and the interests of the Australian Meat Industry in relation to the sale, distribution and export of Australian meat and the reputation of AUS-MEAT Limited.

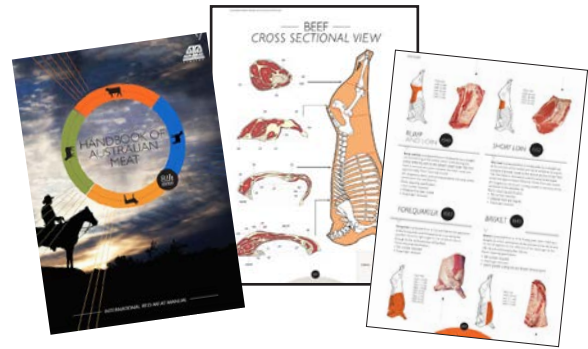
A significant achievement for AUS-MEAT since 2001, has been the development of the The United Nations (UN) Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) Ovine Standards, this has been developed under the auspices of the United Nations UN/ECE involving fifty-five member countries. The Standards provide an International Trading Language for Ovine Meat. AUS-MEAT played a significant role in the development of these Standards on behalf of Australia. The Standards are largely based on the AUS-MEAT Language and are a major development in positioning Australian Processors at the forefront of International Trading in Ovine meat products.

## *Handbook of Australian Meat*

The *Handbook of Australian Meat* is designed to enable Exporters and Importers of Australian product to communicate detailed specifications and descriptions of red meat items using the same common Language. AUS-MEAT has assigned a distinct four-digit number for every primal cut and offal product derived from beef, veal, sheep and goat. Primal cuts are a muscle, or group of muscles, (Bone in or Boneless) which are defined by detailed cutting lines using objective measurements (e.g. rib number), standard descriptions and directions.



# How to read and understand the Handbook of Australian Meat



Product Description	Unique Product code number	Meat Image
<p>BONE-IN SHEEPMEAT</p> <p>ITEM NO. 4882 (0-rib) 4883 (1-rib) 4884 (2-rib) 4885 (3-rib)</p> <p><b>SHORT LOIN PAIR</b> 4883</p>		<p>ITEM NO. 4878 (3-rib) 4879 (2-rib) 4880 (1-rib) 4881 (0-rib)</p> <p><b>SHORT LOIN</b> 4880</p>

**Alternative Description: SHORT LOIN SADDLE**  
**Short Loin Pair** is prepared from the Saddle (item 4910) by a cut along the contour of the specified rib and by a cut at right angle through the thoracic vertebrae severing the back bone. The ribs and Flank on both sides of the Short Loin Pair are cut parallel at a specified distance from the eye muscle at the (cranial) end.  
 Points requiring specification:  
 • Rib number required.  
 • Diaphragm removed.  
 • Distance from eye muscle.  
 • Specify surface fat trim level.

**Short Loin** is prepared from a Loin (item 4860) by the removal of specified ribs parallel to the Forequarter cutting line. To remove the ribs a cut is made along the contour of the specified rib and severing the dorsal edge of the thoracic vertebrae.  
 Points requiring specification:  
 • Rib number required.  
 • Diaphragm removed.  
 • Distance from eye muscle.  
 • Specify surface fat trim level.

### Points requiring specification

Australian meat specifications and product code listings can be obtained by contacting your AUS-MEAT accredited meat supplier. Details of Accredited meat processors can be found at [www.ausmeat.com.au](http://www.ausmeat.com.au)

## Further details

**Australian Meat specifications and product code listings** can be obtained by contacting an AUS-MEAT accredited meat supplier. Details of Accredited meat processors can be found at [www.ausmeat.com.au](http://www.ausmeat.com.au)

**Australian Meat Industry Stakeholders** can access the Handbook of Australian Meat Database through their AUS-MEAT online membership. For more details contact AUS-MEAT at [ausmeat@ausmeat.com.au](mailto:ausmeat@ausmeat.com.au)

## Labelling and trade description



A label is applied on cartons of packaged meat identifying the product and traceability aspect.



The above label is an example of a sheepmeat product label applied to a carton of meat

1. **GENERIC:** Bone-in or boneless statement as well as species identification.
2. **CARCASE IDENTIFICATION:** Category cipher which identifies carcass age and sex.
3. **PRODUCT NAME:** Primal cut description as shown in the Handbook of Australian Meat.
4. **GRAINFED DESCRIPTION:** Identifies the product as meeting Grainfed requirements.
5. **MSA DESCRIPTION:** Identifies the product as MSA graded with eating quality outcomes.
6. **NET WEIGHT:** The meat content of the carton minus the carton weight.
7. **AI STAMP:** Australian Federal Government Inspected stamp.
8. **REFRIGERATION STATEMENT:** Indicates the product has been held in controlled chilling.
9. **COMPANY DETAILS:** Indicates the name of the packer of the product.



# — INTERNATIONAL — MARKETS



Australia is one of the world's most efficient producers of sheepmeat and the world's second largest exporter of sheep and is internationally recognized as free of all major livestock diseases. The Australian Meat and Livestock Industry has had a long-term commitment to food safety, product integrity and traceability, and its product quality complements Australia's focus on responsibility in meeting the demands of its international customers.

Due to high demand Australian sheepmeat competes with both other proteins and with the sheepmeat from other countries for market share. Supplying sheep cuts and carcasses that meet the individual market specifications of our international customers is crucial in ensuring that Australia remains competitive in the international marketplace.

As the world's second largest exporter Australia currently supplies over 100 countries with Lamb and Mutton products. Current figures indicate the largest importers of Australian sheepmeat products include: Middle East, China, USA and South East Asia.

## *Market access*

Different commodities and markets have different requirements with respect to Country to Country agreements and protocols. "Free for All", deregulated export from Australia runs a risk for all industry participants. In the past three decades, Australian Meat Exporters have successfully faced a number of market access challenges which have required a co-operative approach in partnership with Government since the now infamous meat substitution scandals of the early 1980's. Since that time industry participants have invested significant effort in developing and maintaining the reputation of Australian product in over 160 markets around the globe.

With respect to meat, trade description requirements, agreements and protocols vary from country to country.

Examples include:

- The USDA recognise the AUS-MEAT Language as meeting their labelling requirements.
- High Quality Beef (HQB) to the EU is subject to an access agreement for which specifications are determined by measurements within the AUS-MEAT Classification System.
- Japanese authorities recognise the AUS-MEAT chiller assessment Language as being equivalent to their grading system.
- Chile uses the AUS-MEAT classification system to meet their grading system requirements.

# CARCASE FEEDBACK



In the intense business environment of today, gone are the days when decisions could be based on gut feel and all information relevant to a business could be kept in your head. Businesses need relevant information to be able to make sound decisions. If sheep are not performing to expectations or there is room for improvement, producers can make changes to their management system to direct production towards the required specifications.

With the provision of carcase feedback by AUS-MEAT, producers are provided with the essential information required to make decisions regarding carcase performance during Over-the-Hooks trading.

## *Feedback and industry implications*

Feedback is necessary to achieve high levels of compliance against consumer-derived specifications. High compliance is an essential component of the maintenance of sheepmeats price competitiveness against the other protein sources such as chicken and pork.

Feedback can provide producers with the necessary information to:

- Make informed breeding decisions to improve compliance rate against specifications.
- Make informed management decisions, to improve compliance.
- Make the correct selection decisions as to which animals to deliver and when to deliver them, to meet specific market (supply chain) specifications e.g. fatness, carcase weight and growth rate.
- Monitor particular practices beyond the farm gate, particularly where they are involved in retained ownership supply associations
- Benchmark within their supply chain alliances for traits that can be meaningfully compared to improve ultimate farm business performance and profitability.
- Make sound decisions when considering target market changes



## *Mandatory feedback requirements from processors*

When stock are purchased Over-the-Hooks the processor must provide a feedback sheet to the vendor or to an authorised person of the vendor. Where stock are processed pursuant to a service kill, the stock must be processed as Over-the-Hooks unless the service kill contractor otherwise requests in writing.

Upon written request from the vendor or an authorised person of the vendor the enterprise must, within 24 hours of slaughter provide feedback for livestock traded Over-the-Hooks.

The feedback sheet must contain the following information:

a) For lambs and goats (skin off), either individual carcass details or group data recording, where a group is defined as the total number of lambs or goats in a fat class:

- Number of lambs or goats;
- Average hot carcass weight
- Fat Class

b) For other sheep, group data recording

- Number of sheep;
- Average hot carcass weight;



# Sample feedback report



Agent: Elders - Casino

Grower: RD &amp; JK EWEY (LAMBDALE)

Payment Advice: OVINE

Plant: MVE

Lot No: 166521

## SUMMARY FEEDBACK SHEET

Robbo's Quality Meats  
 Lot 7, Slaughterhouse Road  
 MEATVILLE, QLD 4578

(T) +61 7 3361 9224

(F) +61 7 3361 9250

A.B.N: 082 528 881

Delivery Date: 28/01/20

Category	Weight Range	Fat Depth	Quantity	Hot Carcase Weight	Average Rate	\$ Amount
LAMB	Up to 14.0	0 - 5	4	53.8	1.60	86.08
LAMB	14.1 - 16.0	0 - 5	13	194.4	1.70	330.48
LAMB	14.1 - 16.0	6 - 10	10	156.8	2.00	313.60
LAMB	16.1 - 18.0	0 - 5	14	232.1	5.10	1,183.71
LAMB	16.1 - 18.0	6 - 10	26	439.2	5.40	2,371.68
LAMB	18.1 - 20.0	0 - 5	5	94.7	5.10	482.97
LAMB	18.1 - 20.0	6 - 10	44	832.2	5.40	4,493.88
LAMB	20.1 - 22.0	11 - 15	1	20.4	5.40	110.16
LAMB	20.1 - 22.0	6 - 10	26	541.3	5.40	2,923.02
LAMB	22.1 - 24.0	11 - 15	1	23.8	5.40	128.52
LAMB	22.1 - 24.0	6 - 10	4	91.1	5.40	491.94
LAMB	24.1 - 26.0	11 - 15	1	24.3	5.40	131.22
LAMB	24.1 - 26.0	6 - 10	1	24.1	5.40	130.14
<b>Total LAMB</b>			150	2,728.20	4.83	13,177.40

Skins 450.00

**TOTAL 13,627.40**

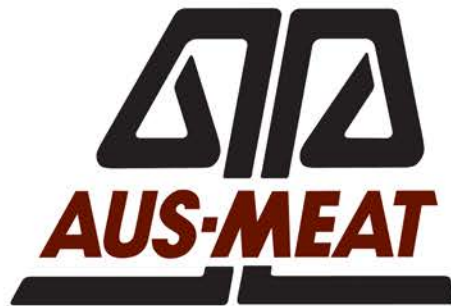
**TOTAL PAYABLE 13,627.40**

Average Weight 18.2

Average Value incl Skin 90.85

This is not a tax invoice. You will receive a separate tax invoice with your remittance advice





HANDBOOK  
OF AUSTRALIAN  
SHEEPMET  
PROCESSING

THE AUS-MEAT LANGUAGE

[www.ausmeat.com.au](http://www.ausmeat.com.au)