

Livestock and Poultry Program



Remote Grading Pilot for Beef

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) launched a pilot program to explore a new method of USDA Meat Grading Service delivery to beef packers. The **Remote Grading Pilot for Beef (RGP Pilot)** matches simple technology with robust data management and program oversight to enable USDA to assess beef carcass characteristics and assign official quality grades from a remote location.

- The **RGP Pilot** utilizes imaging technology and digital data collection to mirror what an official USDA Grader does when physically at the beef packing facility.
- Remote grading dramatically reduces the travel expenses related to USDA grading and certification, making these services more accessible and facilitating access to new, better, and more diverse marketing opportunities for small and independent beef producers and processors.
- RGP Pilot participants receive official results from the USDA Grader within 24 hours, allowing them to process and market their high-quality beef as **USDA Prime, USDA Choice, or USDA Select**, and/or to participate in approved Certified Meat Programs, such as Certified Angus Beef.
- AMS oversight of RGP Pilot activities maintains the integrity of the Meat Grading Service and USDA Grade Mark. This includes metadata capture and analysis, frequent plant records reviews, periodic surveillance visits, and open and continuous communication and support for pilot participants.

RGP Pilot Participation and Cost

- Applicants must be domestic beef slaughter facilities operating under a federal grant of inspection (FSIS inspection), FSIS Cooperative Interstate Shipping (CIS) Program, or Federal-State cooperative inspection agreement.
- After reviewing the RGP Pilot information, contact AMS to request a consultation and confirm eligibility. The business must apply and be approved for USDA Meat Grading Service.
- AMS conducts an Initial Site Visit to review program requirements and complete a Grading Plant Survey before initiating service, after which the Applicant may submit product for remote grading.
- To maintain product and USDA grade mark integrity, AMS periodically reviews an Applicant's internal documentation and controls, and conducts on-site visits to ensure program compliance.

The cost of grading and related compliance activities—including on-site visits—for the RGP Pilot are charged at the Unscheduled Service Fee rates: <https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grading/fees>.

For additional information regarding the RGP Pilot, visit www.ams.usda.gov/remote-beef-grading or contact AMS-LP at AskLP@usda.gov.