

USDA Stamps and Shields

I. Purpose

This instruction outlines procedures for applying stamps on shipping containers to ensure that the product graded or certified by the USDA grader maintains its integrity and is identifiable through all stages of production, storage, and shipment.

II. Policy

Official USDA markings may only be applied under the oversight of a USDA grader. Stamping containers of certified product is an important identification process linking the certified product to the certification document. Methods for application to the shipping container include hand stamping or other computer-generated methods.

Applicants are responsible for obliterating Official USDA box markings from rejected product within 30 days of the rejection notification with USDA grader oversight. The satisfactory obliteration of the USDA grademark and other official stamps from consumer containers and shipping containers consists of blotting out the stamp outline and information contained therein. This may be accomplished by using a marking device, stencil brush, spray paint, or a pressure sensitive sticker that removes the imprint of the stamp or grademark if the sticker is pulled off. All officially identifying USDA grade information must be completely obliterated so that it is not legible.

III. Procedures

A. Rubber Stamps

When grading or certifying product for commodity specifications, approved specifications, or other certifications where stamping is required, all cases in the lot must be single stamped with the appropriate stamp.

When certifying product for test weighing, condition examinations, etc., all sample cases will be stamped, but the stamping of the remaining cases is optional as requested by the applicant. Although stamping of all certified product is encouraged, other methods of linking the product to the certificate may be used when reviewed and approved by the USDA supervisor.

USDA markings applied with rubber stamps must be applied to the shipping container with an official USDA rubber stamp. The rubber stamp may not be applied to consumer packaging within a shipping container unless special approval is obtained from the National Office. Official stamps and shields may be used only when an AMS grader is on duty in the plant.

B. Pre-Printed Grademark

Use of a pre-printed official grademark (shown below) is permitted on poultry labels when approved by FSIS. A complete list of additional poultry grademarks eligible to be pre-printed is available online



via the [Poultry Grading Shields web page](#). Questions regarding the accuracy and use of any label bearing the official grademark are handled through FSIS.



Example of USDA Grade A Poultry Grademark

For FSIS regulated egg product commodities, preprinted labels bearing the “Produced From Grademark” stamp (shown below) are permitted for use when approved by FSIS. For FDA regulated egg commodities (e.g: egg patties, hard-cooked eggs), approval must be provided by the National Office.



Example of Produced From USDA Grade AA Shell Eggs Grademark

For poultry and shell egg products, all labels bearing official grademark identification must be monitored by the grader on duty to ensure proper usage.

C. Computer Generated Stamps

The term “computer generated stamp” refers to any digital replication of a stamp or shield included in [section D](#) which is generated via computer and applied to product containers under grader oversight. These stamps may contain other alterable information such as the certificate number or date of production which must be verified for each lot by the grader on duty. The official identification must be of sufficient size so that the printing is legible and meets the requirements specified in the regulations. Graders must closely monitor and account for the use of computer-generated stamp imprints.

Use of any computer-generated official stamp imprint requires written approval by the National Office. For FDA regulated egg commodities, if a computer-generated stamp or grademark is incorporated on the product label, the label must be approved on form LP-221 and contain the official alpha-numeric approval code issued by the National Office. Graders may not authorize the shipment of product in



packing material bearing the stamp imprints until they are approved. To obtain approval, plant management must submit established control procedures for the label to the National Office with an example label showing how it will be applied. Once approved, the National Office will provide an approval letter containing related information regarding its approval to the applicant and the Quality Assessment Division. The stamp approval letter must be filed at the regional, sub-management area, and plant level until the facility no longer utilizes computer-generated stamps or the approval is revoked. Prior to each use, plant management must advise the grader of their intention to use the labels and the amount of product to be labeled.

Once approved, graders must authorize and monitor the application of computer-generated stamps by plant employees using the same guidelines applicable for the use of official stamps as outlined in [QAD 902B: Grading Stamps – Procurement, Accountability, and Control](#). The “List of Authorized Users of USDA Grading Stamps” log must be completed and filed in the grader’s official files.

National Office Contacts:

Poultry: Samantha.Rhoderick@usda.gov

Red Meat: Darrell.Dowd@usda.gov

Shell Eggs: Jeff.Shomaker@usda.gov

D. Types of Stamps

1. U.S. Grademark (Figure 1) - For use on a container to designate consumer grade. Either the certificate number or the date of production may be used in conjunction with the grademark. Also available, but not shown are Grade B, and Grade C.
2. Sample Graded (Figure 2) - For use when grade certification is made in conjunction with other factors such as test weighing, temperature certification, etc. This stamp may only be used when a certificate is issued and must show the certificate number in the stamp.
3. Contract Compliance (Figure 3) - For use on commodities graded or certified for approved specifications and commodity specifications. Either the certificate number or the date of production may be used in the stamp. The contract compliance stamp is only applied after product is determined to be in compliance with all contract and specification requirements. Optionally, the contract compliance stamp may be applied at time of packaging in reprocessing plants conducting online product examinations (i.e., test weighing and freezer verification). This option may only be used when approved by the USDA supervisor.
4. Accepted as Specified (Figure 4) - For use on commodities graded or certified for approved specifications and commodity specifications. The accepted as specified stamp is only applied after product is determined to be in compliance with all contract and specification requirements. Optionally, the accepted as specified stamp may be applied at time of packaging in reprocessing plants conducting online product examinations (i.e., test



weighing and freezer verification). This option may only be used when approved by the USDA supervisor.

5. USDA Lot Stamp (Figure 5) - This stamp may be used to identify or account for product that has been graded according to special purchase requirements for later use in the plant where produced. It may also be used to identify further processed items produced according to approved specifications. The consecutive day of the year will be used in the stamp.
6. USDA Officially Certified Stamp (Figure 6) - For use on commodities sampled for temperature, condition, weight, or other certifications and approved specification requirements where the grade is not referenced on the certificate or when product is not identified with an official grade. This stamp may be used only when a certificate is issued and must show the certificate number or date of production in the stamp. The officially certified stamp may also be used for condition certification of nongraded product for Puerto Rico.
7. Prepared From U.S. Grademark Poultry (Figure 7) - For use on further processed items produced from graded commodity. Either the certificate number or the date of production with the “Prepared From” stamp may be used in conjunction with the U.S. Grade shield.
8. Produced From U.S. Grademark Shell Eggs (Figure 8) - For use on further processed items produced from graded commodity. Either the certificate number or the date of production with the “Prepared From” stamp may be used in conjunction with the U.S. Grade shield.
9. USDA Further Processing Certification Program (FPCP) (Figure 9) - For use on further processed items of specific product codes of processors operating under an approved FPCP. The FPCP shield is used when a processor has an approved FPCP under [QAD 631: FPCP Industry Guidelines](#). This stamp is only available as a computer-generated stamp and requires approval by the National Office before use.
10. USDA Further Processing Monitoring Program (FPMP) (Figure 10) - For use on further processed items of specific product codes of processors operating under an approved FPMP. The FPMP shield is used when a processor has an approved FPMP under [QAD 632: Further Processing Monitoring Program](#). This stamp is only available as a computer-generated stamp and requires approval by the National Office before use.



Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4

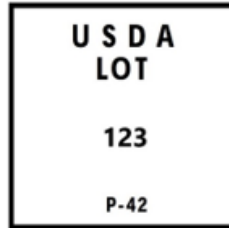


Figure 5



Figure 6

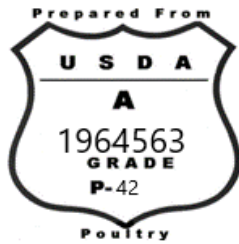


Figure 7

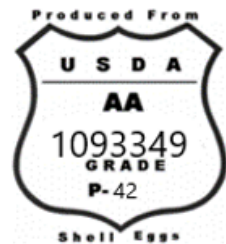


Figure 8



Figure 9



Figure 10

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