Carcass Classification System

Review of the Classification System

The history of the Classification System

- 1932 - Classification of red meat in South Africa started
- 1936 - Age of animals was used as a characteristic to grade carcasses
- 1949 - Use number of permanent incisors for the first time
- 1981 - Age classes were defined

  - A: 0 permanent incisors
  - B: 1 to 6 permanent incisors
  - C: 7 to 8 permanent incisors
  - Class terms: Super for A; Prime for B; Top for C carcasses with fat codes 3 and 4 (3 – 7 mm fat thickness) that was the most preferred fat levels by consumers at the time

- 1990's - The main emphasis was on costs - The 'Grading' of carcasses was terminated and only the classification criteria remained to facilitate a classification system moving to the idea of "description only" and leaving the choice to the buyer and the consumer according to their needs
- 1999 - Carcasses with 2 permanent incisors were put in a separate age class (AB)
- 2000's - The industry became more consumer driven. Although the classification system was not intended for the purpose of ranking carcasses, description of 'Most Tender', 'Tender', 'Less Tender'and 'Least Tender' were given to the 4 age classes, respectively.

Observations

Over time the description systems have been adopted and refined as informed by research in consultation with industry

The classification system is a carcass description system and not a quality assurance system

Update on the process

During 2009 a team of researchers have been appointed to investigate the current carcass classification system. The carcass classification system was the topic of discussion at the 12th Meat Symposium, which was held on the 7th of November 2014 at the University of Pretoria. The theme: Relevance of the South African Carcass Classification System.

The relevant symposium proceedings and all the documents and presentations of this event is available on the RMRD SA website, just follow this link...

Following on from the 2014 symposium these documents were released:

- A critical review of age classification, download here
- Communique from the RMIF, download here

Research presented at the 12th Meat Symposium did not prove conclusively that a change to the present classification system was warranted due to a wide range of variables

This document by the research group was to:

- Evaluate the current system
- Identify shortcomings and needs
- Advice on improvements of the current system

Workshop March 2016

On 1 March 2016 a further workshop was held with all the industry role players with the objective, to further interrogate whether the current system could be improved and how.

There was consensus that:

- Amending the current beef and lamb / mutton meat classification system would not address these issues.
- During the workshop an opinion was expressed that: The Red Meat Industry agreed that the current beef and lamb / mutton classification system is still relevant.

During the workshop an opinion was expressed:

NEW CSS PROGRAMMES

- INTRODUCTION TO NEW PROGRAMMES
- CATTLE & SMALL STOCK PROGRAMMES OVERVIEW
- PROGRAMME 1 - SUSTAINABLE NATURAL RESOURCE UTILISATION
- PROGRAMME 2 - IMPROVEMENT OF LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION AND FORAGE
- PROGRAMME 3 - MANAGEMENT OF AGRICULTURAL RISK TO CREATE A RESILIENT RED MEAT SECTOR
- PROGRAMME 4 - SUSTAINABLE ANIMAL & WELFARE FOR THE RED MEAT SECTOR
- PROGRAMME 5 - ENHANCEMENT OF PRODUCTION AND PROCESSING OF ANIMAL PRODUCTS
- PROGRAMME 6 - CONSUMER AND MARKET DEVELOPMENT OF THE RED MEAT SECTOR
- PROGRAMME 7 - COMMERCIALISATION OF THE EMERGING SECTOR

❯❯ Management, Production and Processing Practise should be improved to assure the consumer of higher quality products.

The workshop concluded that the following aspects needed attention:

❯❯ Consumer awareness and education
❯❯ Labeling and branding
❯❯ More attention to the post harvesting processes, e.g. electrical stimulation and chilling, which should include better education at the abattoirs where proper knowledge may be lacking
❯❯ Possible inclusion of a fat colour code in the classification system
❯❯ Use of beta agonists in production

What is happening now?

A South African Carcass Classification System Workshop.

The classification system is a carcass classification system and not a quality assurance system!

Download the Slides from the presentation by Prof Hettie Schonfeldt