

# BEEF CARCASS CLASSIFICATION



John Heal, Operations Manager

The MLC method of beef carcass classification records commercially important information about individual carcasses. Carcasses are usually classified hot. The MLC method is based on the standard EC beef carcass classification photographic scale.

## Mandatory beef classification

Under EU legislation, mandatory beef classification was introduced in January 1992 in those EU-approved abattoirs slaughtering over 75 cattle each week. MLC's Beef Classification Service incorporates all of the requirements of the mandatory regulations and in addition continues to identify sub-divisions within conformation and fat classes.

## Information recorded:

- **Cold carcass weight** - hot carcass weight less the appropriate rebate.
- **Sex/category** - heifer, steer, young bull, cow, mature bull.
- **Conformation** - five main classes (E, U, R, O and P) according to the shape of the carcass profiles. Classes U, O and P are divided into an upper (+) and lower (-) band.
- **Fatness** - five main classes (1 to 5) according to fat cover. Classes 4 and 5 are divided into low (L) and high (H).
- **Age** - an indication of the age will be given at the option of the participant.

## Classification grid for conformation and fatness

## Classification - consistency

To ensure consistency of application of beef carcass classification standards by MLC staff, various procedures are strictly applied to the operation of the scheme.

		Fat class						
		Increasing fatness →						
Conformation class Improving conformation ↑		1	2	3	4L	4H	5L	5H
	E							
	U+							
	-U							
	R				R4L			
	O+							
	-O							
	P+							
	-P							

**Note:** When describing a carcass, conformation class is followed by fat class, e.g. R4L



**E - Excellent**



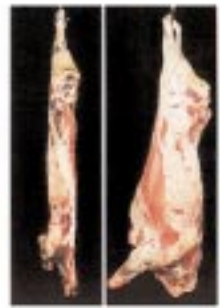
**U - Very good**



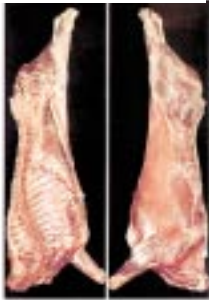
**R - Good**



**O - Fair**



**P - Poor**



**1 - Low**



**2 - Slight**



**3 - Average**



**4 - High**



**5 - Very high**

## Training

Extensive training programmes, both in-plant and centrally, ensure that trainee classifiers reach the required standards of proficiency.



## In-service checks

Classifiers are checked regularly by divisional and regional managers (checkers) with the Business Support Manager providing a GB link. Each check requires the manager separately to classify and record 20 carcasses. The classification scores assessed by the classifier are then checked against the manager's assessments and an analysis of

accuracy levels for the 20 carcasses is made. This analysis measures both bias (the tendency by a classifier to award higher or lower classifications than the checker) and consistency (the overall level of agreement between classifier and checker).

The tolerance levels (the number of differences within acceptable limits) are: bias - plus/minus 4, consistency - total of 6. Any check which does not meet this requirement prompts a further check to ensure corrective action is taken and standards are adjusted.

## Processing of results of checks

All checks are analysed at MLC's headquarters to ensure classifiers are meeting accuracy levels.

To ensure managers (checkers) are applying standards consistently within their own geographical areas, national standardisation exercises are carried out twice each year. These are attended by all technical managers from each region as well as MLC headquarters managers and Rural Payments Agency Inspectorate personnel.

MLC's BEEF CARCASS AUTHENTICATION SERVICE

Tel: 01908 844 132 • Fax: 01908 844 228

Email: [carcase\\_services@mlc.org.uk](mailto:carcase_services@mlc.org.uk) • [www.mlcclassification.org.uk](http://www.mlcclassification.org.uk)

B E E F C A R C A S S E C L A S S I F I C A T I O N