South African Carcass Classification System Workshop

RMAA Conference and Congress
Spier Wine Farm, Stellenbosch
June 2016

Prof Hettie C Schönfeldt
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 - Main emphasis was on costs
“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 - 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.

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.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCT STANDARDS ACT, 1990 (ACT No. 119 OF 1990)

“Quality indication” means a word or expression or brand name or trade mark or any other mark or symbol, that may directly or by implication influence the choice of the buyer in buying that specific meat, that has been approved by the executive officer on written request for use in a roller-mark and/or as a stamp on the carcasses and/or as an indication on meat or the packaging thereof.
Quality Indication Marks

Examples of active trademarks registered by DAFF

- Beefcor Select
- Braeside’s Free Range Grass Fed Meat
- Certified Natural
- Certified Karoo Meat of Origin
- Certified Woodview Beef
- Checkers Angus Beef
- Food Lover’s Free Range
- Fruit & Veg City
- Grassfed
- Gesogte Laingsburg Karoo Lam / Famous Laingsburg Karoo Lamb
- Grassland Meat
- Guaranteed Natural
- HHB Free Range
- Kalahari Certified Free Range Beef
- Karoo Naturally Free
- Morgan - Zilmax Free
- Oak Valley Free-range Acorn-fed Pork
- Oak Valley Wagyu Beef
- Pick n Pay Free Range
- Pick n Pay Veal
- Pork 360
- Spier Pasture Reared Beef
- Woolworths Free Range
• 2009 – Team of researchers appointed to investigate the current carcass classification system
• 12th Meat Symposium – 7 November 2014, University of Pretoria
• Theme: Relevance of the South African Carcass Classification System

Research team:
Dr Phillip Strydom  Dr Arno Hugo
Dr Lorinda Frylinck  Dr Ina van Heerden
Prof Edward Webb  Prof Hettie Schönfeldt
Ms Hester Vermeulen
South African Journal of Animal Science
Issue 3, volume 45, 2015
Special issue: Relevance of the South African Carcass Classification System
• Editorial
• 11 Scientific articles
• 2 Historic perspective articles, available electronically

www.rmrdsa.co.za
http://www.sasas.co.za/journals
A document by the research group to:

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

A further workshop was held with all the industry role players to further interrogate if the current system could be improved and how - 1 March 2016
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.

The most important changes since implementation of the current classification system:

- Beef carcass weight increased from 210 kg in 1993 to 266 kg in 2013
- Use of growth promotors
- Fat content of carcasses has reduced drastically
- Processing practises at the abattoir and retailer (e.g. electrical stimulating, ageing)
There was consensus that:

- Amending the current beef and lamb / mutton meat classification system would not address these issues.
- The Red Meat Industry agreed that the current beef and lamb / mutton classification system is still relevant.

During the workshop an opinion was expressed that:

- Management, Production and Processing Practise should be improved to assure the consumer of higher quality products.
The following aspects need attention:

- Consumer awareness and education
- Labelling 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

http://www.rmrdsa.co.za/Research/CarcassClassificationSystem.aspx
Current RMRD SA research projects

- Animal welfare, stress biomarkers and meat quality
- Slaughter conditions and chevon quality
- Chilling & electrical stimulation of beef carcasses
- Lamb & mutton quality audit
- On-the-hook ageing of beef
- Brine injection of beef
- Occurrence of mycotoxins in red meat products
- The protein quality of animal sources of protein
- Investigating the low, middle and high income Western Cape consumer's perception towards beef & sheep meat
- Consumer purchasing behaviour of red meat

2016
Thank you

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