

This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Agricultural Marketing Service

[PY-97-007]

#### United States Grade Standards for Poultry and Rabbits

**AGENCY:** Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is changing the United States Grade Standards for Poultry. Specifically, the changes will revise the existing grade standards for boneless parts, skinless carcasses and parts, and boneless, skinless parts. New grade standards will be added for ready-to-cook (raw), boneless, skinless drumsticks and legs; and raw size-reduced boneless, skinless products. Existing standards for defeathering will be clarified by detailing specific feather tolerances for Grades A-, B-, and C-quality carcasses and parts. Additionally, the authority to grade-identify boneless, skinless products under three tentative standards that were used to develop the new grade standards will be terminated. The standards are being updated to reflect changes in poultry processing technology and marketing.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** April 29, 1998.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Contact Rex A. Barnes at (202) 720-3271.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** Poultry grading is a voluntary program provided under the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, as amended, 7 U.S.C. 1621 *et seq.*, and is offered on a fee-for-service basis.

On December 4, 1995, the Voluntary United States Grade Standards for Poultry and Rabbits were removed from the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) as part of the National Performance Review program to eliminate unnecessary regulations and to improve

those that remain in force. AMS continues to administer the official standards and makes copies available on the Internet or upon request. The United States Grade Standards for Poultry are now referred to as AMS 70.200 *et seq.* and the United States Grade Standards for Rabbits are now referred to as AMS 70.300 *et seq.*

#### Background and Comments

A notice of proposed changes to the United States Grade Standards for Poultry and Rabbits was published in the **Federal Register** (62 FR 51079) on September 30, 1997. Comments on the proposal were solicited from interested parties until December 1, 1997.

During the 90-day comment period, the Agency received two comments, both from State Departments of Agriculture and Consumer Services. One comment was in agreement with the proposed changes.

The other comment did not oppose the proposed changes, but questioned the Agency's position regarding skin as a defect on skinless carcasses and parts, and boneless, skinless products. As a result of this comment, the Agency is conducting a review of its policy and practices regarding skin on skinless products. If changes or clarifications to the standards appear warranted as a result of this review, a separate notice will be published in the **Federal Register** to advise the industry and public.

The Agency expects the proposed changes to extend the value of the U.S. Grade Standards for Poultry, and will therefore revise the subject standards as proposed. Copies of the revised standards are available from the Standardization Branch, Poultry Programs, AMS, USDA, Room 3944-South Bldg., STOP 0259, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-0259, (202) 720-3506; or on the Internet at [www.ams.usda.gov/poultry/standards/](http://www.ams.usda.gov/poultry/standards/). The changes are summarized as follows:

#### Boneless Parts

The standards for boneless parts will be revised to include drumsticks and legs; address boneless, skin-on parts only; and exclude tenderloins. Tenderloins and other boneless, skinless parts and their respective requirements will be covered under a new section. This change will organize requirements for each product type by section and

make the standards clearer and more "user friendly."

#### Boneless, Skinless Parts

A new section for Grade A-quality tenderloins and other whole muscle boneless, skinless parts will be added and the criteria updated by: (1) Including all parts (previously boneless, skinless drumsticks and legs could not be grade identified); (2) allowing only slight discolorations on the flesh; and (3) requiring parts to be free of cartilage, blood clots, bruises, cuts, tears, and holes.

For trimming of boneless, skinless poultry drumsticks and legs, the standard will require at least one-half of the drumstick and leg remain intact, and the part need no longer retain the meat yield of the original part. This change from the tentative standard is based on the Agency's long-standing policy that parts must be in recognizable portions for identification purposes and that the "one-half" requirement provides a minimum relationship to the meat yield.

#### Size-Reduced Poultry Products

Standards for size-reduced poultry products will be established by the following:

(1) Requirements for Grade A-quality raw size-reduced boneless, skinless products in the form of sliced, diced, and other similarly cut poultry products will be added to the standards.

(2) The section title under the tentative standard will be revised from "Ready-to-Cook, Boneless-Skinless Poultry Products, Without Added Ingredients" to "Size-Reduced Poultry Products." This change clarifies that this section covers size-reduced poultry products exclusively.

(3) The requirements for the "size-reduced" section will be revised from the tentative standard to require uniformity in product size and shape to be dictated by the size-reduction process. This change is necessary because it is improbable that all products of this nature would be uniform, especially since new technology, including slicing and dicing procedures, will constantly be improved, modified, and refined.

(4) Requirements for products labeled "sliced (part)" will be added to the standards. The product, such as breast, thigh, etc., shall: (a) Originate from the slicing of the boneless, skinless part; and (b) collectively approximate the

shape of the original part prior to slicing. Further, the slices need not come from the same part. These requirements are consistent with current guidelines for poultry labeled "whole chicken, cut-up," where all parts need not come from the same chicken.

#### *Feather Criteria*

The feather criteria in Grade A-, B-, and C-quality poultry carcasses and parts and Grade A-quality poultry roasts will be updated. Existing standards require that poultry either be "free of feathers" or possess only a few feathers when examined at normal grading speeds. The standards will be revised to specify the number and length of protruding feathers allowed on poultry for each grade, and limit the length of hair and/or down permitted on ducks and geese. These additions reflect the Agency's actual grading interpretation and practices, and do not require a change in existing procedures.

#### *Tentative Grade Standards*

The authority for the use of the three tentative grade standards will be terminated for: (1) Ready-to-cook boneless, skinless legs and drumsticks; (2) ready-to-cook boneless, skinless products without added ingredients; and (3) cooked boneless, skinless products, without added ingredients published in the **Federal Register** on March 30, 1995 (60 FR 16428), June 12, 1995 (60 FR 3083), and February 15, 1996 (61 FR 5975), respectively.

#### *Miscellaneous Changes*

Additionally AMS will:

(1) Add poultry tenderloins and wing portions to the standards to make each eligible for grade identification. Tenderloins may be identified as Grade A-quality; and wing portions may be identified as Grade A-, B-, or C-quality parts.

(2) Allow the use of clear to semi-clear marinades and sauces for grade-identified products, provided the ingredients do not alter the applicable grade factors or detract from the appearance of the product;

(3) Revise standards for skinless carcasses and parts to include specific labeling options; and

(4) Make additional miscellaneous changes to remove obsolete material and otherwise clarify, update, simplify, and technically correct the standards. These changes are editorial or housekeeping in nature and impose no new requirements.

Dated: March 24, 1998.

**Enrique E. Figueroa,**

*Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service.*

[FR Doc. 98-8176 Filed 3-27-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-02-P

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Natural Resources Conservation Service

#### Snake River Watershed, Marshall, Pennington, and Polk Counties, MN

**AGENCY:** Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement.

**SUMMARY:** Pursuant to Section 102(2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969; the Council on Environmental Quality Guidelines (40 CFR Part 1500); and the Natural Resources Conservation Service Guidelines (7 CFR Part 650); the Natural Resources Conservation Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, give notice that the environmental impact statement is being prepared for Snake River Watershed, Marshall, Pennington and Polk Counties, Minnesota.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** William Hunt, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service, 375 Jackson Street, Suite 600, St. Paul, MN 55101, Telephone: (612) 602-7854.

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:** The environmental assessment of this federally assisted action indicates that the project may cause significant local, regional, or national impacts on the environment. As a result of these findings, William Hunt, State Conservationist, has determined that the preparation and review of an environmental impact statement is needed for this project.

The project's purpose is to provide flood prevention in the watershed. Alternatives under consideration to reach these objectives include conservation land treatment, off-channel floodwater retarding structure, and floodway.

A draft environmental impact statement will be prepared and circulated for review by agencies and the public. The Natural Resources Conservation Service invites participation and consultation of agencies and individuals that have special expertise, legal jurisdiction, or interest in the preparation of the draft environmental impact statement. Further information on the proposed action may be obtained from William

Hunt, State Conservationist, at the above address or telephone (612) 602-7854.

(This activity is listed in the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance under No. 10.904—Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention—and is subject to the provisions of Executive Order 12372 which requires intergovernmental consultation with State and local officials.)

Dated: March 20, 1998.

**William Hunt,**

*State Conservationist.*

[FR Doc. 98-8226 Filed 3-27-98; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-66-M

## ARCHITECTURAL AND TRANSPORTATION BARRIERS COMPLIANCE BOARD

### Americans With Disability Act Accessibility Guidelines for Passenger Vessels

**AGENCY:** Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board.

**ACTION:** Notice of intent to establish advisory committee.

**SUMMARY:** The Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board (Access Board) announces its intent to establish a Passenger Vessel Access Advisory Committee (Committee) to make recommendations for accessibility guidelines for passenger vessels covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. The Access Board requests applications for representatives to serve on the Committee.

**DATES:** Applications should be received by May 14, 1998.

**ADDRESSES:** Applications should be sent to the Office of Technical and Information Services, Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, 1331 F Street, NW., suite 1000, Washington, DC 20004-1111. Fax number (202) 272-5447.

Applications may also be sent via electronic mail to the Access Board at the following address: pvaac@access-board.gov.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Paul Beatty, Office of Technical and Information Services, Architectural and Transportation Barriers Compliance Board, 1331 F Street, NW., suite 1000, Washington, DC 20004-1111. Telephone number (202) 272-5434 extension 19 (Voice); (202) 272-5449 (TTY). This document is available in alternate formats (cassette tape, Braille, large print, or computer disk) upon request and is also available on the Board's Internet site (<http://>