

New Zealand Meat

GUIDE TO LAMB AND MUTTON CARCASS CLASSIFICATION



To the producers, buyers & sellers of New Zealand Meat

The New Zealand Meat Classification Authority, a joint body of the New Zealand Meat Board and the Meat Industry Association of New Zealand, provides the classification system, described in this guide, on a voluntary basis.

The classifications have been developed by the New Zealand Meat Board, in consultation with the Meat Industry Association of New Zealand.

New Zealand export meat is sold on a cold weight basis. For ease of understanding the term "export weight" is used in this brochure to describe cold weight. New Zealand farmers are paid on a hot weight basis. Both weights are shown in this guide.

The system, which is available only to licensed users, is protected by a registered trademark i.e.



Use of the system is audited by a Meat Classification Authority appointed body.

Lamb

Definition: Young sheep under 12 months of age or which do not have any permanent incisor teeth in wear.

Classification is based on Fat Classes and Weight Classes (see table), for example YL, has a low fat content (GR: up to and including 6mm), hot weight of 9.1kg and over up to but not including 13.3kg and export weight of 9.0kg to 12.5kg.



Muscling Class: Effective from 1 October 1992, a voluntary muscling class was introduced in the heavier Y and P grades. This recognises well muscled animals that have well rounded legs with a good depth of muscle and full loin.

The identifying letter is E, for example, YME.

Standard carcass trim is detailed below.

Ovine Standard Carcass Trim

The standard description of a carcass prior to weighing is the entire body of the slaughtered animal dressed through the removal of the following:





1. Pelt.
2. Head, (including tongue) either manually knifed through the atlas-axis joint, or if mechanically severed, removed by a severing cut which replicates the manual removal. A minimal variation of one vertebra either side of the atlas joint can be tolerated.
3. Feet. The forefeet at the carpus-metacarpus joint and the hindfeet at the tarsus-metatarsus joint.
4. Internal organs, including all digestive, respiratory, excretory and reproductive organs.
5. Mammary systems and cuds, leaving surrounding tissue intact and ensuring glands remain as required for inspection.
6. Skirts, both thick and thin.
7. Internal Fats. All kidney, and channel fat including that over the tenderloin and up into the suet pocket.
8. Tail. At the first coccygeal vertebrae.
9. Aorta. All tissue.
10. Neck. Trim as removed clearly with the pluck, and any extraneous material i.e. that which is contaminated by blood clots, ingesta etc.

Lamb and mutton are classified according to the maturity of the carcass (lamb, hogget or mutton), sex, fat content (GR measure), weight and in some cases muscling

Fat Classes	Weight Classes				
	A	L ¹	M	X	H

Export Carcass Classes	A Light weight and almost devoid of external fat	A	None						
			Up to but not including 9.1kg						
			Less than 9.0kg						
Y Low fat content		YL	Up to and including 6mm	YM	Up to and including 7mm	YX	Up to and including 9mm		
			9.1kg and up to but not including 13.3kg		13.3kg and up to but not including 17.1kg		17.1kg and over		
			9.0kg to 12.5kg		13.0kg to 16.0kg		16.5kg and over		
				YME	Well muscled YM ⁴	YXE	Well muscled YX ⁴		
P Medium fat content		PL ²	Over 6mm, up to & including 12mm	PM ²	Over 7mm, up to & including 12mm	PX	Over 9mm, up to & including 12mm	PH	Over 9mm, up to & including 12mm
			9.1kg and up to but not including 13.3kg		13.3kg and up to but not including 17.1kg		17.1kg and up to but not including 21.3kg		21.3kg and over
			9.0kg to 12.5kg		13.0kg to 16.0kg		16.5kg to 20kg		20.5kg and over
					PME		Well muscled PM ⁴		PXE

Export Processing Classes (Not exported in carcass form except under dispensation)	T High Fat content. Cut and trimmed of excessive fat prior to export	TL	Over 12mm, up to and including 15mm	TM	Over 12mm, up to and including 15mm	TH	Over 12mm, up to and including 15mm	
			9.1kg and up to but not including 13.3kg		13.3kg and up to but not including 17.1kg		17.1kg and over	
			Over 15mm		Over 15mm		Over 15mm	
			9.1kg and up to but not including 13.3kg		13.3kg & up to but not including 17.1kg		17.1kg and over	
F Excessive fat content. Cut and trimmed of excessive fat prior to export	FL	FM	CH	Up to and including 12mm	CM	Up to and including 12mm	CH	Up to and including 12mm
C Not eligible for export due to trimming or mutilation. Intact cuts may be exported. Has at least three of the four hind primal cuts ³ acceptable as export cuts	CL	CM	CH	Up to and including 12mm	CM	Up to and including 12mm	CH	Up to and including 12mm
M (Manufacturing)	Includes carcasses which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> are too thin for export in carcass form or as primal cuts are damaged but fail to meet the cutter criteria 							

 GR-A fat content assessment based on measurement of total tissue depth over the 12th rib at a point 11cm from the midline of the carcass.
 Hot weight - the basis on which New Zealand producers are paid. This measurement is used only within New Zealand.
 Export weight, or cold weight - the basis on which New Zealand export carcasses are sold.
 Muscling class.

- Beta lamb is a specialised class. A very young milkfed lamb weighing less than 7.5kg. Moderately to well muscled with an even but not excessive fat cover.
- Excessively yellow carcasses are not eligible for export in carcass form or boneless form.

Notes:

- Devoid of fat A type carcasses that are in the L weight range are classed as restricted YL.
- "Leggy" carcasses from the PL and PM classes are classed as restricted PL and PM. Producers receive the same payment for "Leggy" carcasses and no separate identification appears on the killing sheets.
- Primal cuts refer to legs, short loins and long loins. NZMPB Circular Number 1250.
- See muscling class.

Mutton

Definition: Female (ewe) and castrated male (wether) sheep having more than two permanent incisors in wear. A wether must not show any ram characteristics.

Some hogget carcasses are given mutton classifications (see "Hogget").

Classification is based on five Fat Classes which apply to all weights, for example, MM is almost devoid of fat (GR: up to and including 2mm), all weights.

FAT CLASSES - all weights

MM Almost devoid of fat	Up to and including 2mm
MX ¹ Low fat content	Over 2mm, up to and including 9mm
ML ¹ Medium fat content	Over 9mm, up to and including 17mm
MH High fat content	Over 17mm, up to and including 25mm
MF Excessive fat content	Over 25mm
MP ² Mixed	Variable

GR- A fat content assessment based on measurement of total tissue depth over the 12th rib at a point 11cm from the midline of the carcass.

1. For payment purposes MX and ML carcasses are subdivided by weight into - up to but not including 23.3kg and 23.3kg and over.
2. MP (processor) class includes damaged carcasses and covers carcasses of all Fat Classes and all weights.

Hogget

Definition: A young male sheep or maiden ewe having no more than two permanent incisors in wear.

Classification is based on two Fat Classes which apply to all weights, for example, HX has low fat content (GR: up to and including 9.0mm).

FAT CLASSES - all weights

HX Low fat content	Over 2mm up to and including 9mm
HL Medium fat content	Over 9mm up to and including 17mm

GR- A fat content assessment based on measurement of total tissue depth over the 12th rib at a point 11cm from the midline of the carcass.

1. Manufacturing-type carcasses (almost devoid of external fat) are classified as mutton, MM.
2. Carcasses that are generally not eligible for export due to trimming are classified MP and are cut and/or boned.
3. Carcasses with a fat content of 17.0mm to 25mm GR inclusive are classified as MH mutton and over 25mm GR are classified as MF mutton.

Ram

Definition: Adult uncastrated male sheep having more than two permanent incisors in wear.

Classification system: One classification, R, is given for all weights and fat contents.