

Certified Angus Beef Live Specifications Change

Effective July 1, the USDA has modified the live animal specifications for characteristics for beef programs claiming Angus influence. This affects the Certified Angus Beef® (CAB) and Black Canyon® Premium Reserve (BCPR) branded beef programs that include premiums on the USPB grid. Previously, the requirements were that each animal's hide color (hair color) must be 51% or more black hided.

The new requirements from USDA read as follows: "Cattle eligible for certification in Angus influence beef programs based on phenotype (appearance) will have a main body that must be solid black, with no other color behind the shoulder, above the flanks, or breaking the midline behind the shoulders, excluding the tail. Angus influence cattle may be either horned or polled. Carcasses of certified live animals which display certain non-Angus characteristics (e.g., dairy conformation, Holsteins, Brahman humps) will be excluded as specified in the carcass specifications for approved programs." A footnote also includes "At times, a black hair coat can become sun bleached and appear to be a shade of brown, particularly on the back. If the base of the hair close to the skin is black, then the entire brown-tipped area should be considered solid black. However, if the hair color is brown to the roots, it should be considered as brown in color."

Basically, this is a refinement and more specific wording. Holstein and Brahman influenced cattle have always been excluded as part of the carcass specifications which require superior muscling characteristics and a maximum neck hump on the carcass. There are NO changes to the ten existing carcass specifications, which are as follows:

1. Modest or higher marbling. On USPB carcass data, this would be a "500" minimum marbling score code.
2. Medium or fine marbling texture.
3. Only class "A" carcass bone maturity.
4. Ribeye area of 10 – 16 square inches.
5. Carcass weight of 1050 pounds or less.
6. Less than one inch of fat thickness.
7. Superior muscling.
8. Practically free of capillary ruptures (also known as blood splatter or blood splash).
9. No dark cutters.
10. No neck hump exceeding two inches.

Solid black and black white face cattle still qualify as they always have. Likewise, white is allowed on the face, legs, belly and tail. However, cattle with white behind the shoulders and above the flank will now be excluded. This could affect animals that might include the following breeding: Longhorn cross, Pinzgauer cross, Belted Galloway or some of the spotted Simmental color patterns. A Shorthorn cross that is a "blue-roan" color pattern is, and always has been, excluded from Angus programs. Also, red (Hereford and Red Angus) gray (Charolais influence), brown and yellow hide color animals have, and always have been, excluded. At this point, we really do not expect this to have a large impact. Thus far, CAB percentages for USPB carcasses have been similar to where they were running in June, prior to the change.

For more information, please call and ask for Brian. ♦