

ANIMAL RAISING CLAIMS

Title: FREE RANGE

Date: 27/10/17

1. Purpose

An Animal Raising Claim is a claim made in the Trade Description or export documentation about the animal or supply chain specifically relating to Animal Husbandry conditions, feeding, handling, drug treatments and/or geographical references. An approved program within the QMS must be developed to provide integrity to the Trade Description where Animal Raising Claims are used and must be clearly defined and legally based.

The three core components of the Animal Raising Claim:

Program Approval: Approval by AUS-MEAT Limited for the Livestock Sourcing through to the application of final Trade Description, incorporated within the AUS-MEAT approved Quality Management System (QMS) (all markets).

Approved Arrangement: Approval by the Department of Agriculture (the Department) based on Program Approval by AUS-MEAT under the MOU between the Parties (export purposes).

Market Access: Pre-conditions for specific market access or operational requirements to meet importing country requirements including label approval (where applicable).

2. Scope

This guideline document covers a claim of *Free Range* in a Trade Description applied to meat or meat products.

3. Definitions

Free Range in the description of Australian Meat or Meat Products means:

Livestock have not been confined for the purposes of intensive feeding for production and have had continuous access to graze in open pastures.

4. Background

An Animal Raising Claim is a claim made in the Trade Description or export documentation about the animal or supply chain specifically relating to animal husbandry conditions – in this case *Free Range* claims.

An Approved Program within the Enterprise's QMS must be developed to provide integrity to the Trade Description where this Claim is used. In Export Registered Establishments this program must be included within the Approved Arrangement and receive approval from the Department which may be based on AUS-MEAT Program Approval.

5. References

- Meat Notice MN 2016/02 – AUS-MEAT Responsibilities
- DAWR: : [Approved Arrangement](#) Guideline, Meat

6. Methodology

The minimum requirement for the inclusion of a *Free Range* claim in a Trade Description is that all products labelled with this marketing claim must incorporate information explicitly stating that animals have been raised in a manner that meets the following conditions:

- a) have continual access to graze in open pastures
- b) have not been confined for the purpose of intensive feeding for production:

- c) may be confined as necessary to conduct husbandry and management activities such as weighing, drafting, marking, weaning, treatment and preparation for transport. All Types of Feed may be on offer during these activities
- d) time spent in confinement must be no longer than the time required to carry out the husbandry and management activities.

Commonly used grazing practices where large numbers of animals may graze growing pasture or forage in small paddocks for short periods such as cell grazing or rotational grazing is acceptable provided other intensive feed sources are not required to be on offer in a confinement area to maintain production.

Whole of Life (Never Ever) claims must be supported by lifetime traceability to support the claim including use of the NLIS Database, as applicable.

Animals to be processed into product with a raising claim of *Free Range* must be presented with a vendor declaration (Livestock Sourcing requirement). Confinement and feeding claims must be clearly described on relevant Point of Slaughter documentation which may take the form of the livestock description box on the National Vendor Declaration (NVD) or any other suitable form such as a Livestock purchase contract or the like provided sufficient information is available.

The raising claim of *Free Range* must be verified by evidence of on farm confinement facilities and practices which addresses the claims made. Evidence may include aerial or satellite imagery.

The raising claim may be verified by an independent third party process through a routinely verified on farm QA system which addresses the claims made (Approved Supplier Evaluation).

First Party Declaration (Self Attestation)

Livestock Sourcing Program

- Vendor Declaration of the animal husbandry conditions
- Defined husbandry conditions incorporating relevant details of feeding practices and feeding period traceability.
- May include Livestock Contract documentation with defined husbandry treatment criteria relevant to the raising claim.

Second Party Verification - Establishment (on plant) Systems

Point of Slaughter Certification

- Verification using prescribed standards or Industry codes of practice as applicable for the animal husbandry declarations that are relevant.
- Point of Slaughter Certification may require counter signing by the Department
- Separation program (identification and traceability)
- Trade Description is accurate and complete
- Compliance with importing country requirements (Label approval etc.)

Third Party Certification

Accredited Certification Bodies

- On farm verification program (3rd party verification) e.g PCAS, GAP, LPA QA.

Approved Supplier Evaluation

Where required by Importing Country Requirements (e.g. Canada) each component along the supply chain must be subject to supplier selection, evaluation, approval and re-evaluation which shall comprise independent 3rd party audits. Development and maintenance of approved supplier lists and producer

registration programs would assist the supply chain verification process. PCAS and GAP represent third party certified programs.

Livestock Producers

- Vendor declarations (livestock buying contracts, declarations including NVD's)
- Feeding and confinement practices and records
- Verification of property layout and facilities
- Production and turnoff records
- Introduced livestock purchases (outside stock)
- Lifetime traceability

Saleyard Procurement

- Traceable sales documentation supported by completed Vendor declarations including required husbandry conditions information.

Approved Arrangement

An Approved Program with specific coverage:

- Livestock Sourcing program including Vendor declaration of specific husbandry conditions
- Defined husbandry conditions (feeding and confinement)
- Point of Slaughter certification may require countersigning by Department of Agriculture
- Separation program (identification and traceability)
- Trade Description compliance (accurate and complete)
- Compliance with importing country requirements (Label approval etc.)

7. Monitoring

The Approved Program must include monitoring, corrective action and record keeping procedures to maintain the integrity of the program.

The monitoring method(s), monitoring frequency and how the monitoring is recorded need to be described with any measurements or observations to assess whether the program is operating within defined limits (how is it done, when is it done, how often is it done). This must be specific and state the pass/fail criteria. The frequency of monitoring must be defined.

8. Market Access

[US Label Approval](#) – All raising claim labels and labels including a language other than English on the label or on the carton or packaging must be approved by the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) prior to use. A copy of the relevant section of the Approved Arrangement (AA) endorsed by the Department of Agriculture may be provided to FSIS with the draft label approval submission to demonstrate justification for label claim.

[EC Regulation No. 1760/2000](#) – establishing a system for the identification and registration of bovine animals and regarding the labelling of beef and beef products.

[CFIA](#): Canada Packaging and Labelling Chapter 7

Note: Refer MICOR for any other importing country requirements and further information.

9. Records

The Approved Program (part of the Approved Arrangement) will identify any records that need to be maintained for verification purposes.

10. Industry Standards / Recognised Programs

LPA-QA: On-Farm Quality Assurance (QA) program, incorporating the CATTLE CARE and Flockcare programs represents the second tier (Level 2) of the LPA framework.

PCAS: is an assurance program that enables the industry to prove claims relating to pasturefed or grassfed production methods. The PCAS Standards also include two optional modules to support claims relating to the freedom from antibiotics and hormone growth promotants (HGPs).

Global Animal Partnership: GAP– 5 step Animal Welfare Certification program, including a Range/Pasture and Outdoor Requirements step – Section 7.

Humane Choice: is a whole farm accreditation system for Australian and New Zealand true free range.

11. Responsibility and Verification

The Department: ensures the legislative requirements for trade description are met by the verification of the trade description system and relevant functions.

AUS-MEAT Limited performs verification processes whereby AUS-MEAT takes day to day operational responsibility, including that for corrective action, for all trade description other than those basic descriptions that importing country authorities may require the Department, as the government regulating authority, to oversight.