



Advice 2 / 09

6 February 2009

**TO: ALL LICENCED MEAT EXPORTERS
MANAGEMENTS OF ALL AUS-MEAT ACCREDITED ENTERPRISES**

ATTENTION: Officer in Charge AUS-MEAT Standards:

TRADE DESCRIPTION – USE OF THE TERM CERTIFIED

BACKGROUND

The information included within a Trade Description must comply with a number of Industry Standards, Importing Country Requirements and in some instances Purchaser Specified Requirements, all of which must comply with Schedule 6 of the *Export Control (Meat and Meat Products) Orders 2005*.

There have been recent cases where certain Animal Raising claims have been used in conjunction with registered Trade Marks incorporating the word “Certified” which in turn have appeared in Trade Descriptions applied to Labels, Bags or Prescribed Tags under various formats.

The Australian Meat Industry Language and Standards Committee has considered whether any potential exists for confusion in the market place that may be brought about by the use of the word in a manner which may be interpreted as implying “Certification” that is underpinned by a third party.

AUS-MEAT recognises that a number of third party supply chain “Certification programs” already exist and that most of these programs are underpinned by conformance and verification processes. In addition, a number of Company owned programs are also using the term “Certified” under a system of self attestation to the validity of the claims being made.

The Committee has agreed that that the use of the word “Certified” must be treated in accordance with AUS-MEAT’s normal processes for verification of trade description claims and that claims using the word “Certified” must be subject to routine underpinning by AUS-MEAT via the Accredited Enterprise’s Approved Quality System.

QUALITY SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS

AUS-MEAT is responsible for monitoring the application of Trade Description for accuracy and completeness through an Accredited Enterprise’s AUS-MEAT Approved Quality System in keeping with requirements under AQIS Approved Arrangements and the more general requirement for Truth in Labelling in section 15 of the Export Control Act.

The minimum requirements which need to be met to provide integrity to any statement in the trade description attesting to certain attributes being met must include:

1. A clear objective statement of the “attribute” which is the subject of the claim which is acceptable to the market;
2. Any operational procedures or standards that apply to achieve the attribute;
3. The acceptance criteria to verify that the attribute has been met;
4. The traceability system used to maintain the identity and segregation of conforming product;
5. Any special training or skills that are required to produce or classify product; and
6. The QA procedures, monitoring programs and records that underpin the system.

THIRD PARTY CERTIFIED

For the purposes of a trade description applied to meat, if claims are made in conjunction with the word “Certified” where the verification of an attribute is reliant on assessment of criteria which are largely outside the control of an AUS-MEAT Accredited processing facility, it would be expected the claim should be based on sourcing from a system that is verified by a recognised third party certifier / conformity assessment body e.g. claims relating to specific raising claims against a prescribed standard.

FIRST PARTY CERTIFIED (SELF ATTESTATION)

In addition, individual companies may make claims in conjunction with the word “Certified” for branded product (e.g. ‘XYZ meat company certified’) for programs where the necessary components for verification of the attribute and associated systems are directly under the control of an AUS-MEAT Accredited Enterprise and are included within the Approved Quality System. Adherence to these systems can then effectively be verified by AUS-MEAT as part of the company’s Accreditation. As a minimum, verifiable evidence to support such claims would need to be available on a consignment by consignment basis.

Under these circumstances the integrity of a branded claim associated with the company’s name is effectively underpinned by AUS-MEAT Accreditation and is equivalent to that of any other statement based on third party certification e.g. claims based on the assessment of livestock for conformity to phenotypic characteristics which can be assessed at the Accredited facility prior to slaughter.

IMPORTING COUNTRY REQUIREMENTS

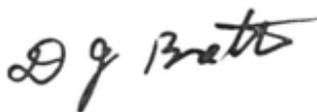
Notwithstanding the above, Importing Country Requirements may determine the type of certification required along with any requirements for label approvals and the degree of AQIS involvement (e.g. EU and US).

ACTION TO BE TAKEN

All Trade Descriptions applied to meat and meat products which incorporate the term “Certified” (or any derivative of this term) must be underpinned by either a third party verification process or a first party verification process adequately documented under the Approved Quality System. Approval by AUS-MEAT under the normal process for amendments to the Quality System will be required and the required monitoring, verification and corrective action processes and records must be maintained. In keeping with normal arrangements all proposed changes to the Quality System should be discussed with AUS-MEAT and arrangements for approval progressed depending on the nature of the claim.

Accredited Enterprises should note that the use of all “Animal Raising claims” (regardless of the use of the word “certified”) requires prior approval by AUS-MEAT.

For further information on please contact the AUS-MEAT Limited e-mail – ausmeat@ausmeat.com.au



Denis Brett
GENERAL MANAGER
STANDARDS & TECHNICAL OPERATIONS
www.ausmeat.com.au

Previous References:
AUS-MEAT Advice 18/91