

Canadian Beef Grading Standards for Youthful Cattle



Quality Grade Standards for Youthful Cattle

GRADE	MARBLING*	MATURITY**	MEAT COLOR	FAT COLOR	MUSCLING	MEAT TEXTURE*
CANADA						
Prime	Slightly abundant	Youthful	Bright red only	No yellow fat permitted	Good muscling or better	Firm only
AAA	Small	Youthful	Bright red only	No yellow fat permitted	Good muscling or better	Firm only
AA	Slight	Youthful	Bright red only	No yellow fat permitted	Good muscling or better	Firm only
A	Trace	Youthful	Bright red only	No yellow fat permitted	Good muscling or better	Firm only
UNITED STATES***						
Prime	Slightly abundant	Maturity class A & B	Light red	Yellow fat permitted	No minimum requirement	Moderately firm
Choice	Small	Maturity class A & B	Dark-cutters permitted	Yellow fat permitted	No minimum requirement	Slightly soft
Select	Slight	Maturity class A	Dark-cutters permitted	Yellow fat permitted	No minimum requirement	Moderately soft
Standard	Practically devoid	Maturity class A & B	Dark-cutters permitted	Yellow fat permitted	No minimum requirement	Soft

* Minimum marbling and meat texture permitted for quality grade class. ** Maturity categories reflect domestic requirements. *** Standards as of May 2010.

Marbling Standards for Youthful Cattle

CANADA	Marbling Score	UNITED STATES
Canada Prime	Abundant	USDA Prime
	Moderately Abundant	
	Slightly Abundant	
Canada AAA	Moderate	USDA Choice
	Modest	
	Small	
Canada AA	Slight	USDA Select
Canada A	Trace	USDA Standard
	Practically Devoid	

The Canadian marbling standards were changed in 1996 to mirror the copyrighted marbling standards of the United States. The minimum marbling standards used for USDA Prime (slightly abundant), Choice (small) and Select (slight) are the same minimum standards used in Canada to segregate the youthful quality carcasses into Canada Prime, AAA and AA respectively.

Canadian Grading Standards for Mature Cattle

In addition to the grades for youthful cattle, Canada also has quality grades for mature animals. Bulls are assigned an E grade and cows are placed into one of four D grades. Canada's D1 grade requires excellent carcass muscling, firm white or amber fat and less than 15 millimeters (mm) or just over 9/16th of an inch fat depth. D2 requires medium to excellent muscling, white to yellow fat and less than 15 mm fat depth. The D3 grade is assigned to carcasses with low levels of muscling while D4 grades indicate a fat depth of greater than 15 mm. It is also possible to purchase ungraded Canadian beef.

For more information on beef from Mature Cattle contact us to get your copy of the Canadian Commercial Beef Brochure.

