

Notices

Federal Register

Vol. 64, No. 184

Thursday, September 23, 1999

This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Office of the Secretary

Notice of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board Meeting

AGENCY: Research, Education, and Economics, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act, 5 U.S.C. App., the United States Department of Agriculture announces a meeting of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Deborah Hanfman, Executive Director, National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board, Research, Education, and Economics Advisory Board Office, Room 3918 South Building, U.S. Department of Agriculture, STOP: 2255, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-2255.

Telephone: 202-720-3684. Fax: 202-720-6199, or e-mail: lshea@reeusda.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board, which represents 30 constituent categories, as specified in section 802 of the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform Act of 1996 (Pub. L. No. 104-127), has scheduled a National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board Meeting, October 18-19, 1999.

An orientation for New Advisory Board members will begin at 8 a.m. on Monday, October 18. The full Advisory Board meeting will be held 10:30 a.m.-7:30 p.m., October 18, and 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 19. During this time, the Advisory Board will (1) Elect the new officers and members of the Executive Committee; (2) discuss the

draft report on Small Farms Research; (3) review highlights from the FY 99 Northeast and Southern Regional listening sessions and other stakeholder input on agricultural research and education opportunities; (4) conduct a focus session on "Agricultural Biotechnology in the Public Interest: Impact on Farms, Food, Fiber and the Environment" to hear experts on a variety of topics regarding agricultural biotechnology, including: (a) Highlights, status, and potential of biotechnology for the public good; (b) public education, communication and dialogue; (c) enhancement, safety and security of the food systems; (d) environmental issues; (e) USDA-related activities; and (f) economic and structural implications. Time will be allotted for general Advisory Board discussion and public comments. USDA and the Office of Management and Budget will provide perspectives on the REE budget outlook.

Dates

October 18—8 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

Orientation for new Advisory Board Members

October 18—10:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.—Advisory Board General Meeting and Focus Session on Agricultural Biotechnology

October 18—5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.—Special Session on Biotechnology with a Guest Speaker

October 19—8 a.m. to 5 p.m.—Continuation of Biotechnology Focus Session

Place: 8th Floor Conference Room (Please check in with guard, Identification is needed.), USDA, CSREES, Aerospace Building, 901 D Street SW, Washington, DC.

(Note: Meeting location may vary. Locations for special sessions will be announced at the meeting.)

Type of Meeting: Open to the public.

Comments: The public may file written comments to the USDA Advisory Board Office contact person before or within a reasonable time following after the meeting. All statements will become a part of the official records of the National Agricultural Research, Extension, Education, and Economics Advisory Board and will be kept on file for public review in the Office of the Advisory Board; Research, Education, and Economics; U.S. Department of

Agriculture; Washington, DC 20250-2255.

Done at Washington, D.C. this 1st day of September, 1999.

Eileen Kennedy,

Deputy Under Secretary, Research, Education, and Economics.

[FR Doc. 99-24770 Filed 9-22-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-22-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Agricultural Marketing Service

[No. LS-99-09]

United States Standards for Grades of Feeder Cattle

AGENCY: Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice and request for comments.

SUMMARY: The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) of the Department of Agriculture (USDA) is soliciting comments on a proposal to revise the United States Standards for Grades of Feeder Cattle. Specifically, USDA is proposing to adjust the minimum requirements for the three thickness grades to accommodate thicker muscled cattle and reflect current marketing practices. Additionally, the Department is proposing to adjust the frame size parameters to reflect the genetic changes that have taken place in the cattle population since 1979 when the current standards were adopted. Industry and other groups, including States' Departments of Agriculture that officially grade feeder cattle for marketing programs, requested that these changes be made. All other grade aspects of the current standards will remain unchanged.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before November 22, 1999.

ADDRESSES: Written comments may be submitted to Herbert C. Abraham, Chief, Standardization Branch, Livestock and Seed Program, Agricultural Marketing Service, US Department of Agriculture, Room 2603 South Building, STOP 0254, PO Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456; faxed to (202) 720-1112; or e-mailed to Herbert.Abraham@usda.gov.

Comments should reference the date and page number of this issue of the **Federal Register**. All comments received will be made available for

public inspection at the above address during regular business hours (8:00 a.m.-4:30 p.m.).

The current US grade Standards for feeder cattle, along with the proposed changes, are available either through the above addresses or by accessing AMS's Home Page on the Internet at www.ams.usda.gov/standards/stanls.htm.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Herbert C. Abraham, Chief, on (202) 720-4486.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Section 203(c) of the Agricultural Marketing Act of 1946, as amended, directs and authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture "to develop and improve standards of quality, condition, quantity, grade, and packaging and recommend and demonstrate such standards in order to encourage uniformity and consistency in commercial practices * * *" AMS is committed to carrying out this authority in a manner that facilitates the marketing of agricultural commodities and makes copies of official standards available upon request. The United States Standards for Grades of Feeder Cattle do not appear in the Code of Federal Regulations but are maintained by USDA.

AMS is proposing to change the United States Standards for Grades of Feeder Cattle using the procedures it published in the August 13, 1997, **Federal Register** and that appear in part 36 of Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations (7 CFR part 36).

The current United States Standards for Grades of Feeder Cattle were adopted September 2, 1979. These grade standards were originally used more extensively in the Eastern United States where marketing feeder cattle by commingling ownership and packaging

by grade and weight is popular due to the small average cow herd size. Nevertheless, the feeder cattle standards have become the descriptive standards of choice by most of the feeder cattle industry nationwide. More importantly, these standards have served to educate the industry about the importance of frame size in feeder cattle and how frame size relates to an animal's predetermined, market ready weight. Additionally, the standards have emphasized the importance of muscle thickness as it relates to the beef cattle industry.

Significant changes (genetic and management) have taken place in the feeder cattle segment of the beef industry since the current grade standards were adopted. The industry has moved from essentially four basic breeds in the 1950's to nearly 100 in the 1990's, resulting in a dramatic effect on the basic genetics of the beef cattle population. Consequently, feeder cattle type—as it relates to mature size—has also changed dramatically. This, linked with changes that have occurred during the same time period in feeder cattle management practices, has caused a growing concern by USDA that the current feeder cattle standards have become outdated since their adoption 20 years ago.

The feeder cattle grades are based on differences in frame size and muscle thickness—two of the most important genetic factors affecting merit (value) in feeder cattle. Frame size refers to the animal's skeletal size—its height and body length—in relation to its age. Frame size relates to the weight at which, under normal feeding and management practices, an animal will produce a carcass of a given grade. Large framed animals require a longer time in

the feedlot to reach a given grade and will weigh more than a small framed animal would weigh at the same grade. Muscle thickness is related to muscle-to-bone ratio at a given degree of fatness and hence to carcass yield grade. Thicker muscled animals produce a higher percentage yield of lean meat. The current grades recognize three frame size grades and three muscle thickness grades. The three frame sizes are Small Frame, Medium Frame and Large Frame. The three muscle thickness grades from the thickest to the thinnest are No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3.

USDA entered into a project with Colorado State University funded by the USDA, AMS, Federal/State Market Improvement Program to determine: (1) The live weights at which the current population of Large, Medium, and Small framed feeder steers and heifers attain a degree of finish associated with a carcass quality grade of low Choice, and; (2) an effective approach for stratification of feeder cattle into muscle thickness categories that reflect eventual differences in carcass muscularity and ultimate USDA Yield Grade. Results of this project indicated that the current standards could be improved by increasing the minimum weights specified for frame size grades to more accurately reflect today's beef cattle population. Also, the project indicated that the proposed adjustments in the muscling grades may distribute feeder cattle numbers more evenly among the No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 grades and would more effectively identify carcass USDA Yield Grade differences among feeder cattle.

Based on these findings, and the feeder cattle industries' request, AMS proposes the frame size parameters be changed:

	Small frame	Medium frame	Large frame
Steers:			
From (current)	<1000 #	1000-1200 #	>1200 #
To (proposed)	<1100 #	1100-1250 #	>1250 #
Heifers:			
From (current)	<850 #	850-1000 #	>1000 #
To (proposed)	<1000 #	1000-1150 #	>1150 #

The Department also proposes to change the muscle grades:

Upper 2/3 of current #1 muscling grade = proposed #1

Upper 1/3 of current #2 and lower 1/3 of current # 1 = proposed #2

Lower 2/3 of current #2 = proposed #3

Less than current requirements for #2 = proposed #4

AMS is publishing this notice with a 60-day comment period which will

provide a sufficient amount of time for interested persons to comment on the proposed revision to the standards.

Authority: 7 U.S.C. 1621-1627.

Dated: September 17, 1999.

Barry L. Carpenter,

Deputy Administrator, Livestock and Seed Program.

[FR Doc. 99-24771 Filed 9-22-99; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-02-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Information Collection; Request for Comments; Advertised Timber for Sale

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the