

YORKSHIRE FEDERATION OF YOUNG FARMERS' CLUBS



CARCASE GRADING GUIDE 2025

Courtesy of Eblex

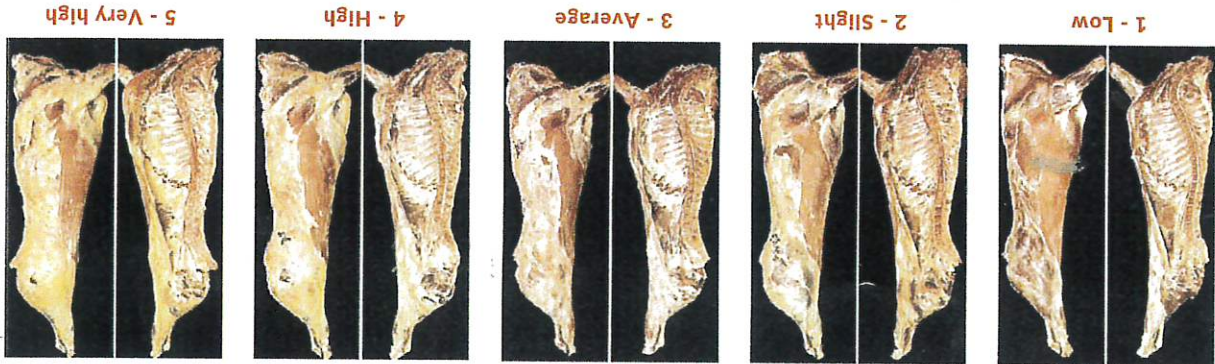
Fatness

An assessment in five classes from 1 (very lean) to 5 (very fat), with classes 4 and 5 being subdivided into leaner (L) and fatter (H) bands.

Conformation



Fatness



The Classification Grid

When a carcass is described in classification terms, the conformation class is always given first. For example, the most common type of steer beef carcass would have a conformation class of R and a fat class of 4L. This would be recorded as R4L, and its position is shown in the grid

15 point scale: To further enhance the classification grid some abattoirs have adopted a '15 point' grid in which each conformation and fat class is sub-divided into three, these are: low (-), medium (mid) and high (+) classes. The '15 point' grid allows for a more precise description of the carcass.

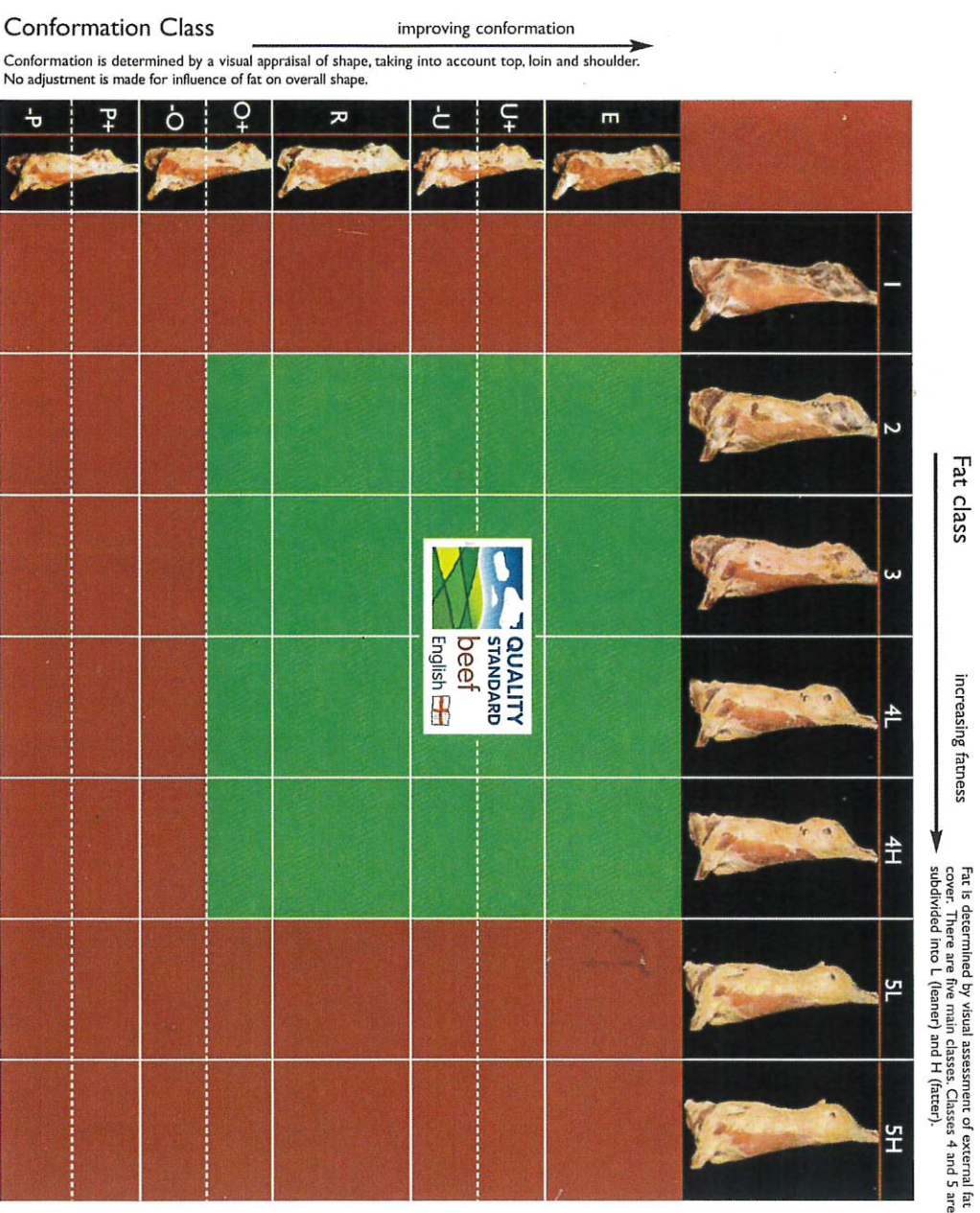
Conformation

Fatness					Conformation				
1	2	3	4L	4H	5L	5H	E	U+	U-
							R	O+	O-
							P+	P-	

Beef carcass classification

Carcass assessment addresses conformation and fat. Conformation is assessed from E to P. Fat cover is scored on a 1-5 scale. Combining scores for conformation and fat determines the markets which cattle suit.

The Quality Standard Mark Scheme stipulates specific carcass classifications for beef. Fat Class 2-4H Conformation E-O+, the optimum classification for better meat yield. (See right)*



*Carcasses within the following parameters can carry the Quality Standard Mark.

- Females under the age of 36 months are acceptable. They must not have been used for breeding or be in calf.
- Steers under the age of 36 months are acceptable.
- Carcasses must have a fat class of between 2-4H and have a conformation of E-O+.
- For qualifying livestock 30 months or under: Maturation of 7 days is required on primals used for frying, roasting and grilling (from slaughter to the final consumer).
- For qualifying livestock aged between 30-36 months: Maturation of 14 days is required on primals used for frying, roasting and grilling (from slaughter to the final consumer). Alternatively, one of the post-slaughter processes to enhance tenderness as outlined in 'EBLEX Guidance to Meat Quality' can be used, ie Hip bone suspension or electrical stimulation.
- Bulls must be no older than 16 months at slaughter. Primals used for frying, roasting and grilling must be subject to a minimum 14 days maturation (from slaughter to the final consumer).

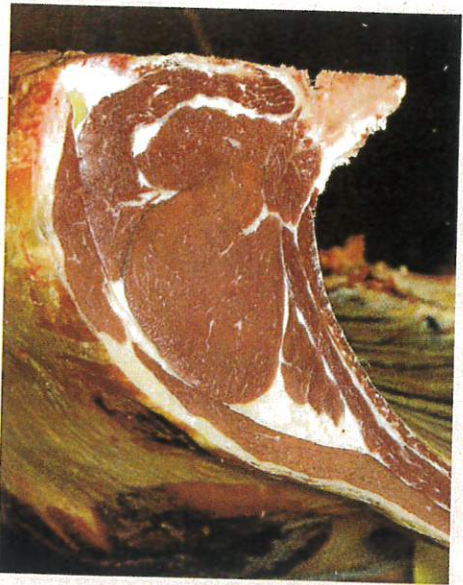
Examples of classification

U+2

Very good muscle development with all profiles being convex.

The top bit (round), shoulder and rump are rounded, along with the back being wide and thick.

The topside spreads over the pelvis.



Slight fat cover with flesh visible almost everywhere. Within the thoracic cavity the muscle is clearly visible between the ribs.

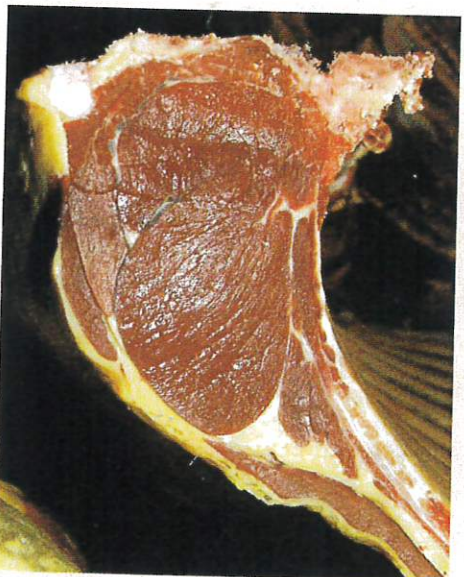
R2

Profiles on the whole mainly straight with good muscle development throughout the carcass.

Well-developed top bit (round).

Thick back, less wide at the shoulder but still neat and fairly well developed.

Topside and rump are slightly rounded.



Slight fat cover with flesh visible almost everywhere. Within the thoracic cavity the muscle is clearly visible between the ribs.

Examples of classification

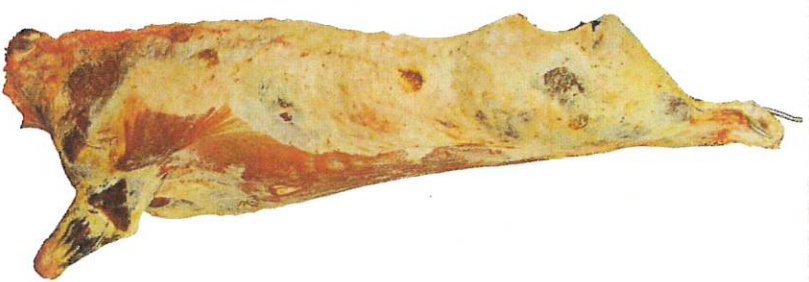
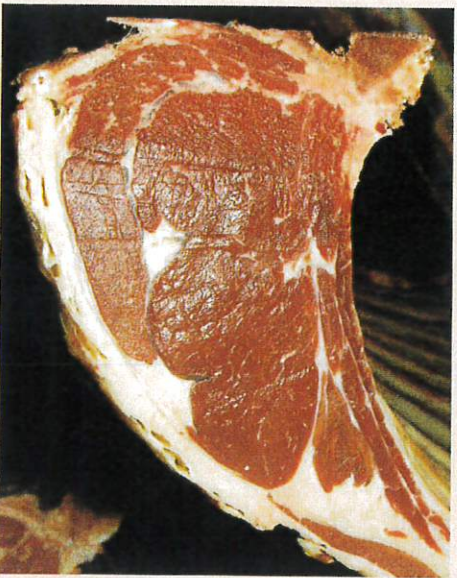
R4L

Profiles on the whole mainly straight with good muscle development throughout the carcass.

Well-developed top bit (round).

Thick back, less wide at the shoulder but still neat and fairly well developed.

Topside and rump are slightly rounded.



Most areas of flesh covered with fat, but with muscle still visible across the top bit (round) and shoulder. Some distinctive fat deposits within the thoracic cavity. Seam of fat on the top bit (round) becoming distinctive. Muscle between the ribs becoming infiltrated with some fat.

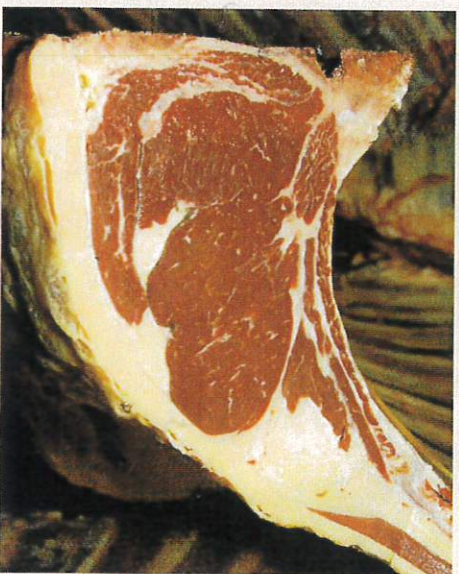
R4H

Profiles on the whole mainly straight with good muscle development throughout the carcass.

Well-developed top bit (round).

Thick back, less wide at the shoulder but still neat and fairly well developed.

Topside and rump are slightly rounded.



Most areas of flesh covered with a thickening layer of fat, muscle only partially visible across the top bit (round) and shoulder. Prominent seams of fat on the top bit (round). Some distinctive fat deposits in the thoracic cavity and the muscle between the ribs infiltrated with fat.

Examples of classification

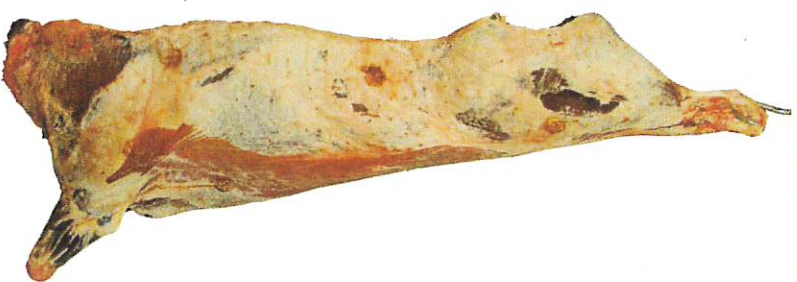
O+3

Profiles straight to concave with overall average muscle development.

Average to lacking development over the top bit (round).

Average to lacking thickness on the back.

Shoulder flat with a straight profile over the rump.



Average fat covering, with the exception of the top bit (round) and shoulder, everywhere covered with a layer of fat. Slight deposits of fat in the thoracic cavity but with the muscle still visible between the ribs.

O+5H

Profiles straight to concave with overall average muscle development.

Average to lacking development over the top bit (round).

Average to lacking thickness on the back.

Shoulder flat with a straight profile over the rump.



All areas of flesh covered with a thick layer of fat. Heavy deposits in the thoracic cavity with muscle between the ribs infiltrated with fat. The top bit (round) is almost completely covered with fat so that the seams are no longer clearly visible.

Examples of classification

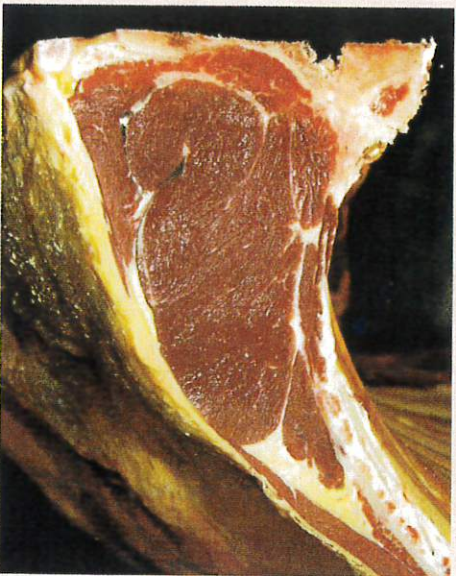
-03

The odd straight profile but mainly concave.

Lacking development over the top bit (round).

Lacking thickness on the back.

Shoulder angular with a straight profile over the rump.



Average fat covering, with the exception of the top bit (round) and shoulder, everywhere covered with a layer of fat. Slight deposits of fat in the thoracic cavity but with the muscle still visible between the ribs.

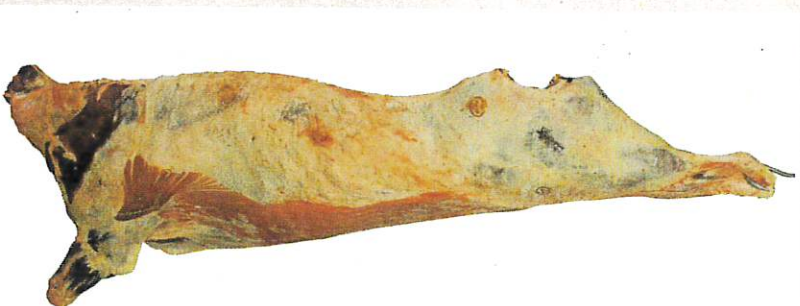
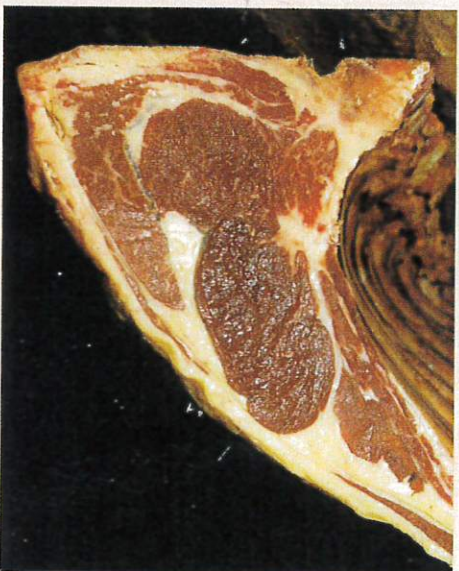
-04L

The odd straight profile but mainly concave.

Lacking development over the top bit (round).

Lacking thickness on the back.

Shoulder angular with a straight profile over the rump.



Most areas of flesh covered with fat, but with muscle still visible across the top bit (round) and shoulder. Some distinctive fat deposits within the thoracic cavity. Seam of fat on the top bit (round) becoming distinctive. Muscle between the ribs becoming infiltrated with some fat.

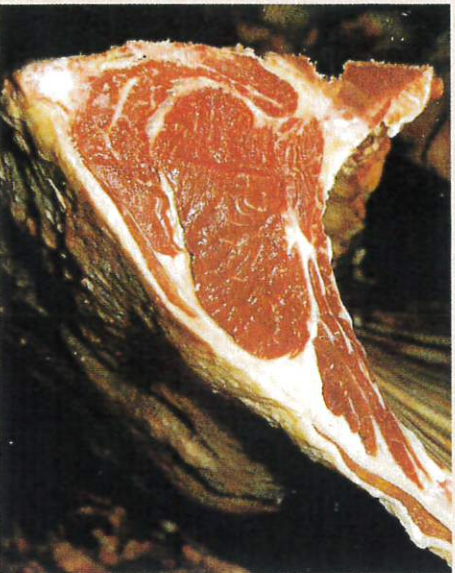
Examples of classification

P+3

All profiles concave to very concave with poor muscle development.

Poorly developed over the top bit (round), narrow back with bones visible.

Shoulder is flat, also with bones visible.



Average fat covering, with the exception of the top bit (round) and shoulder, everywhere covered with a layer of fat. Slight deposits of fat in the thoracic cavity but with the muscle still visible between the ribs.

O+3

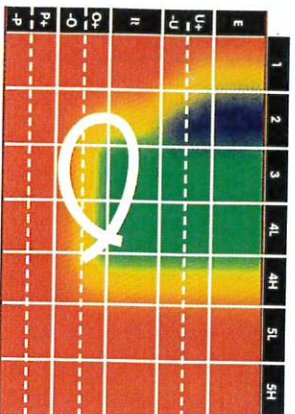


Conformation

- Average round. Slightly lacking thickness on a slightly flat back

Fat

- An indication of very thin fat cover over the tail head which yields slightly to moderate pressure. Ends of the transverse process are prominent with individual bones felt as deep corrugations. Individual ribs are felt easily as corrugations, with some fat cover detectable



Profiles straight to concave with overall average muscle development.
Average to lacking development over the round.
Average to lacking thickness on the back.
Shoulder flat with a straight profile over the rump.

Average fat covering, with the exception of the round and shoulder, everywhere covered with a layer of fat. Slight deposits of fat in the thoracic cavity but with the muscle still visible between the ribs.



O+5H

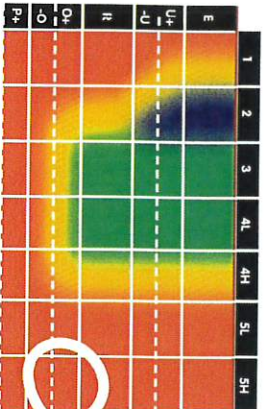


Conformation

- Average round. Slightly lacking thickness on a slightly flat back

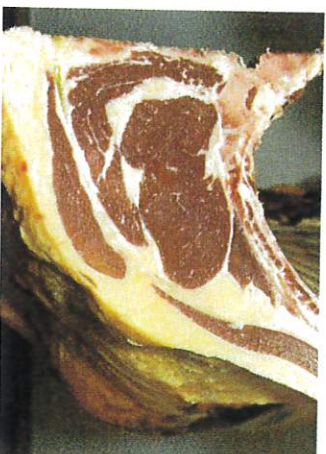
Fat

- The tail head looks very puffy and feels spongy. A thick and sometimes patchy layer of fat can be felt over the bones. The individual transverse processes cannot be felt. The rib cage is smooth to the touch with a tendency to patchiness and individual ribs cannot be felt



- Profiles straight to concave with overall average muscle development.
- Average to lacking development over the round.
- Average to lacking thickness on the back.
- Shoulder flat with a straight profile over the rump.

All areas of flesh covered with a thick layer of fat. Heavy deposits in the thoracic cavity with muscle between the ribs infiltrated with fat. The round is almost completely covered with fat so that the seams are no longer clearly visible.





Conformation

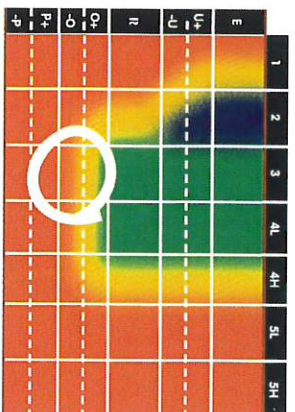
- Average round, lacking development. Lacking thickness on a fairly flat back

Fat

- An indication of very thin fat cover over the tail head which yields slightly to moderate pressure. Ends of the transverse process are prominent with individual bones felt as deep corrugations. Individual ribs are felt easily as corrugations, with some fat cover detectable



The odd straight profile but mainly concave. Lacking development over the round. Lacking thickness on the back. Shoulder angular with a straight profile over the rump.



Average fat covering, with the exception of the round and shoulder, everywhere covered with a layer of fat. Slight deposits of fat in the thoracic cavity but with the muscle still visible between the ribs.

P+3

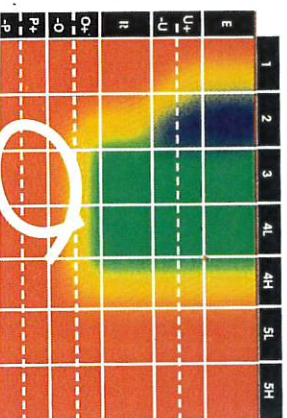


Conformation

- Poorly developed on the round. Narrow with bones visible across the back. Shoulders flat with bones visible

Fat

- An indication of very thin fat cover over the tail head which yields slightly to moderate pressure. Ends of the transverse process are prominent with individual bones felt as deep corrugations. Individual ribs are felt easily as corrugations, with some fat cover detectable



All profiles concave to very concave with poor muscle development. Poorly developed over the round, narrow back with bones visible. Shoulder is flat, also with bones visible.

Average fat covering, with the exception of the round and shoulder, everywhere covered with a layer of fat. Slight deposits of fat in the thoracic cavity but with the muscle still visible between the ribs.

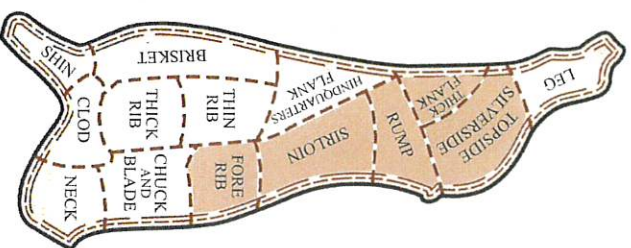


Conformation differences

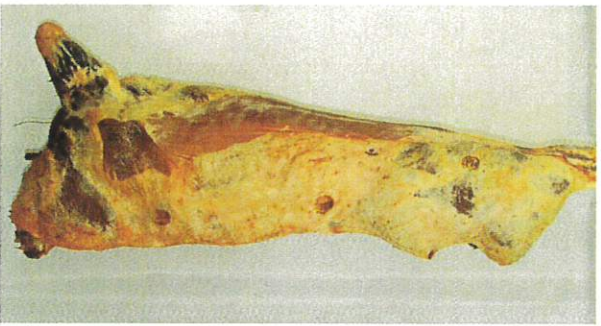
Eye muscles and fat levels



Poor carcass



Premium cuts



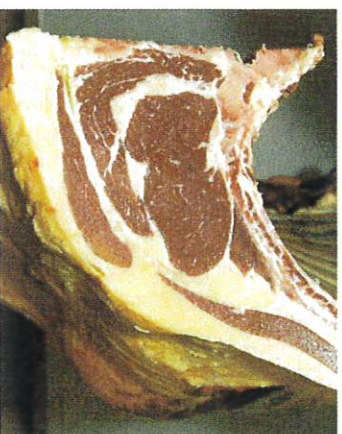
Very good carcass



Too lean 2



Ideal 4L



Too fat 5H

U+2

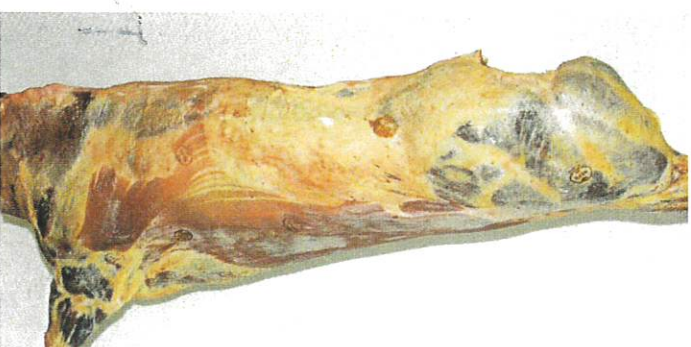
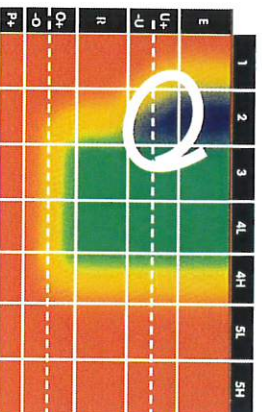


Conformation

- Wide and thick back from a rounded shoulder to round buttocks

Fat

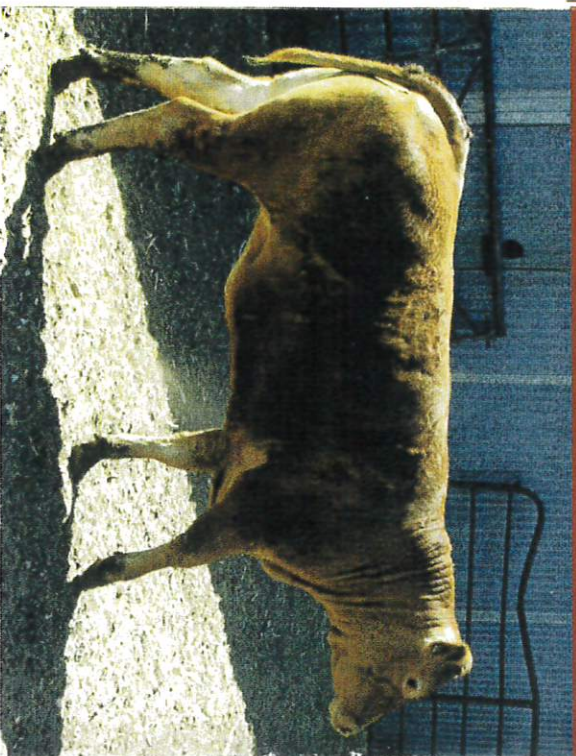
- Skin is tight on the tail head and the area around the root of the tail and over the pin bones is fairly firm. The ends of the transverse processes are prominent and individual bones are felt as deep corrugations. The ribs are prominent, visible, and also felt as deep corrugations



Very good muscle development with all profiles being convex. The round, shoulder and rump are rounded along with the back being wide and thick. The topside spreads over the pelvis.

Slight fat cover with flesh visible almost everywhere. Within the thoracic cavity the muscle is clearly visible between the ribs.





Conformation

- Well developed round and shoulder with thick back

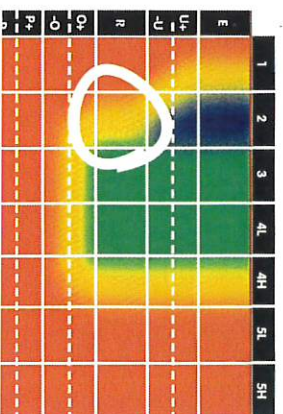
Fat

- Skin is tight on the tail head and the area around the root of the tail and over the pin bones is fairly firm. The ends of the transverse processes are prominent and individual bones are felt as deep corrugations. The ribs are prominent, visible, and also felt as deep corrugations

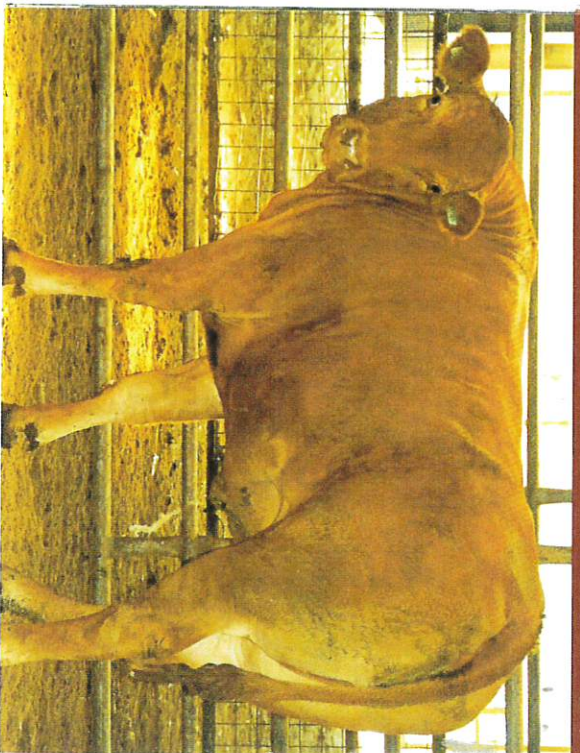


Profiles on the whole mainly straight with good muscle development throughout the carcass. Well-developed round. Thick back, less wide at the shoulder but still neat and fairly well-developed. Topside and rump are slightly rounded.

Slight fat cover with flesh visible almost everywhere. Within the thoracic cavity the muscle is clearly visible between the ribs.



R4L

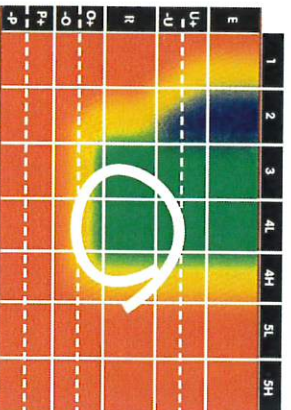


Conformation

- Well developed round and shoulder with thick back

Fat

- Thin layer of fat felt when skin on either side of tailhead is pinched between fingers. Ends of transverse processes slightly rounded by fat. Thin layer of fat is felt over ribs with light pressure



Profiles on the whole mainly straight with good muscle development throughout the carcass. Well-developed round. Thick back, less wide at the shoulder but still neat and fairly well-developed. Topside and rump are slightly rounded.



Most areas of flesh covered with fat, but with muscle still visible across the round and shoulder. Some distinctive fat deposits within the thoracic cavity. Seam of fat on the round becoming distinctive. Muscle between the ribs becoming infiltrated with some fat.

R4H

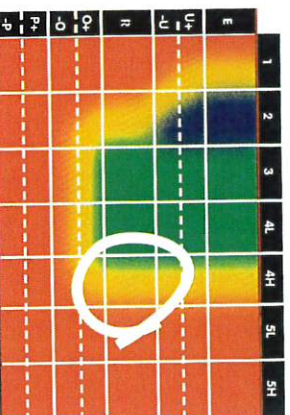


Conformation

- Well developed round and shoulder with thick back

Fat

- Tail head looks slightly puffy and a soft layer of fat is felt using light pressure. Surface area around the pin bones is soft and the fat tends to spread back towards the tail head. The ends of the transverse processes are slightly rounded by fat which is felt with light pressure. Across the ribs, a distinct layer of soft fat is felt over the bones. Individual ribs are felt only with moderate pressure



Profiles on the whole mainly straight with good muscle development throughout the carcass. Well-developed round. Thick back, less wide at the shoulder but still neat and fairly well-developed. Topside and rump are slightly rounded.

Most areas of flesh covered with a thickening layer of fat, muscle only partially visible across the round and shoulder. Prominent seams of fat on the round. Some distinctive fat deposits in the thoracic cavity and the muscle between the ribs infiltrated with fat.





E - Excellent

All profiles convex to superconvex;
exceptional muscle development

Round: very rounded
Back: wide and very thick, up to the shoulder
Shoulder: very rounded

Tonside spreads markedly over the symphysis (symphysis pelvis)



U - Very good

Profiles on the whole convex;
very good muscle development

Round: rounded
Back: wide and thick, up to the shoulder
Shoulder: rounded

Topside spreads over the symphysis (symphysis pelvis)



R - Good

Profiles on the whole straight;
good muscle development

Round: well-developed
Back: still thick but less wide at the shoulder
Shoulder: fairly well-developed



O - Fair

Profiles straight to concave;
average muscle development

Round: average development to lacking development
Back: average thickness to lacking thickness
Shoulder: average development to almost flat

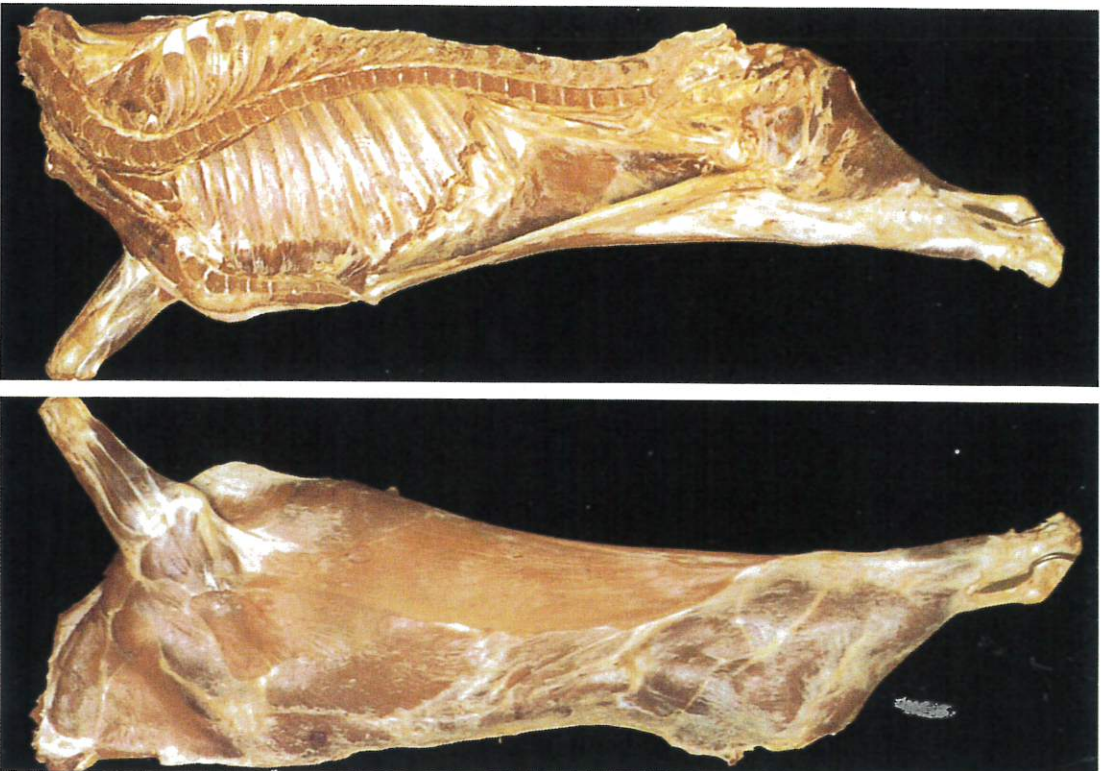


P - Poor

All profiles concave to very concave;
poor muscle development

Round: poorly developed
Back: narrow with bones visible
Shoulder: flat with bones visible

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1 - Low

None up to low fat cover

No fat within the thoracic cavity

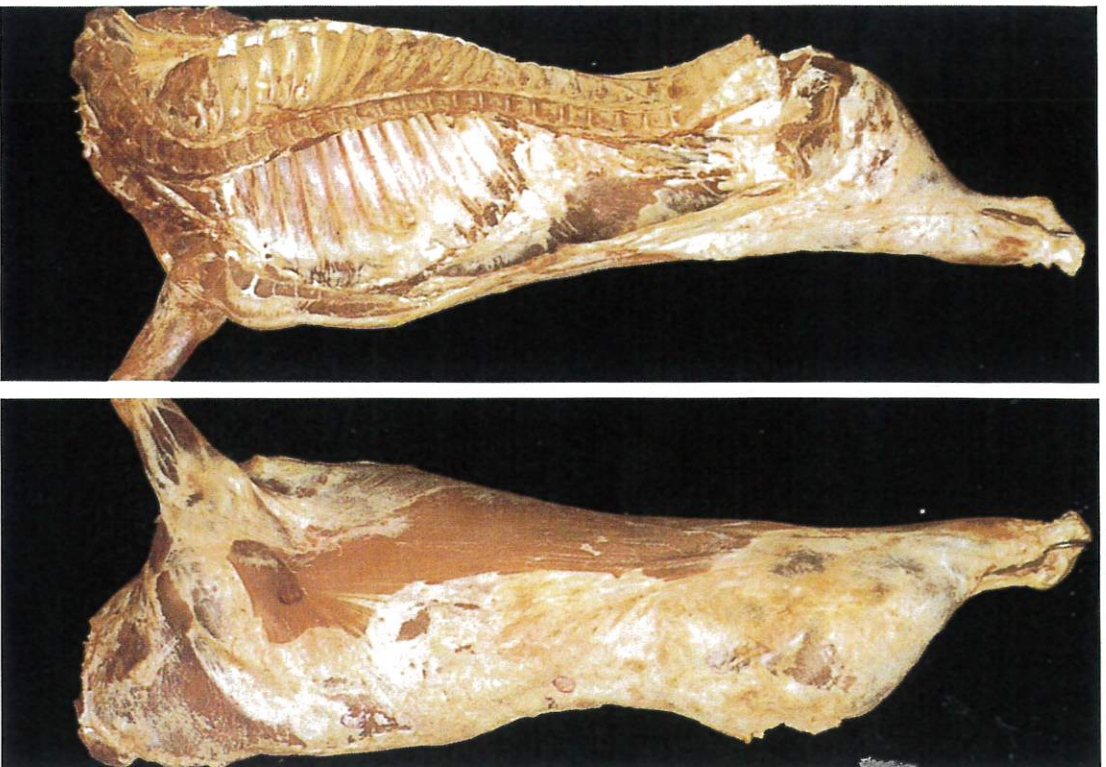
Price (excluding VAT) in Luxembourg: 6 €



2 - Slight

Slight fat cover, flesh visible almost everywhere

Within the thoracic cavity the muscle is clearly visible between the ribs



3 - Average

Flesh, with the exception of the round and shoulder, almost everywhere covered with fat, slight deposits of fat in the thoracic cavity

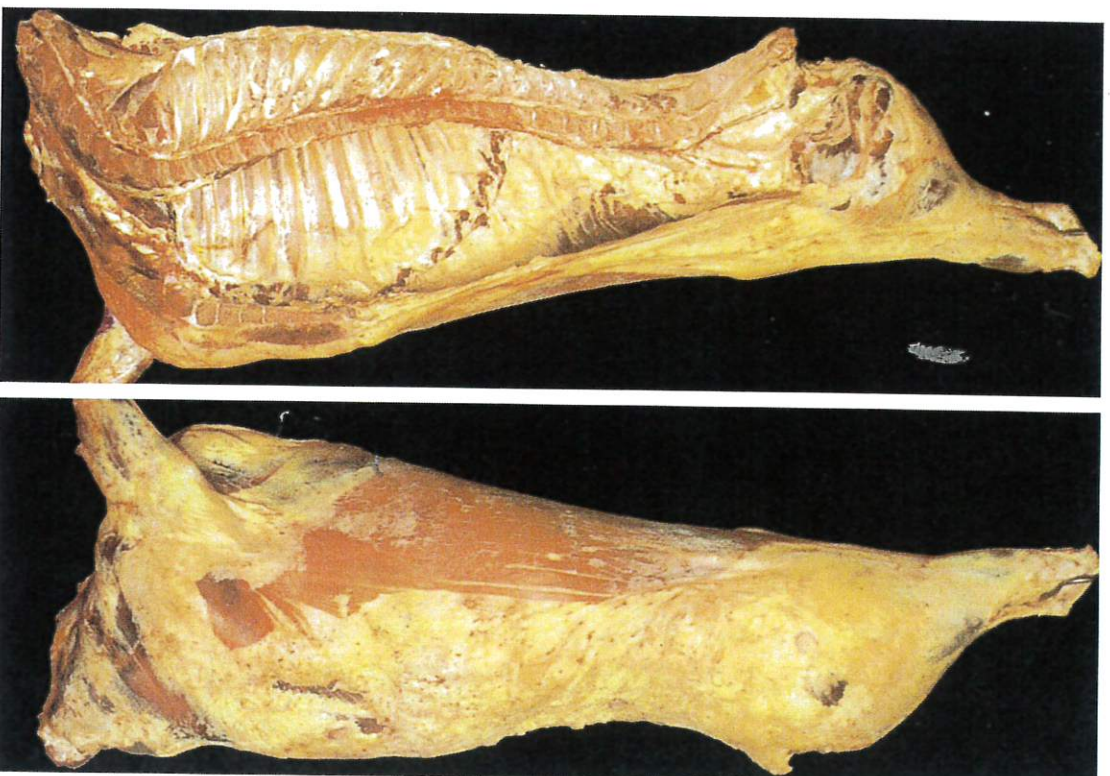
Within the thoracic cavity the muscle is still visible between the ribs



4 - High

Flesh covered with fat, but on the round and shoulder still partly visible, some distinctive fat deposits in the thoracic cavity

The seams of fat on the round are prominent. Within the thoracic cavity the muscle between the ribs may be infiltrated with fat



5 - Very high

Entire carcass covered with fat; heavy fat deposits in the thoracic cavity

The round is almost completely covered with fat, so that the seams of fat are no longer clearly visible

Within the thoracic cavity the muscle between the ribs is infiltrated with fat