



# MSA Standards Manual

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Introduction, definitions and application

Section



# Foreword

Meat Standards Australia (MSA) is a beef, lamb and sheepmeat eating quality program managed by Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA). The program is designed to predict the consumer eating quality outcome of individual cuts by a cook method.

The primary objectives of the MSA Standards for Licensed Enterprise are to ensure:

- a. The reputation and integrity of the MSA program is upheld
- b. Correct integration of MSA calculations, algorithms and methods into system vendor developed products and/or plant based systems
- c. Correct presentation and use of MSA Trade Marks, terms, values and calculated results on product labels, producer feedback, product specifications and marketing material.

These Standards relate to version 2.0 of the MSA model for beef, 2005 release of Eating Quality of Australian Lamb and Sheepmeat and version 3.0 of the MSA model for sheepmeat.

The MSA Standards Manual is divided into a number of sections. Each section is a standalone document that will be issued and amended independently of other sections.

All sections of the MSA Standards Manual must be used collectively. Certain sections may not be applicable for a specific business, operation, facility or activity. It is the user's responsibility to determine which sections are appropriate for their business.



**Sarah Strachan**

General Manager

Research Development and Adoption

Meat & Livestock Australia

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**Prepared by:** Meat & Livestock Australia

**Authorised by:** Meat & Livestock Australia

**Meat Standards Australia**

**T:** 1800 111 672

**W:** [mla.com.au/msa](http://mla.com.au/msa)

**E:** [msaenquiries@mla.com.au](mailto:msaenquiries@mla.com.au)

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'MSA' and 'Meat Standards Australia' are registered trade marks of Meat & Livestock Australia Limited. The MSA 'Graded' symbol is a trade mark of Meat & Livestock Australia Limited.

# MSA Standards – Sections

## 1 Introduction, definitions and application

## 2 Schedule of fees

This section outlines the schedule of fees required for specific licensed Enterprise.

## 3 Licence and trade mark

This section outlines how to identify which MSA licence category suits your business and use of the MSA Trade Mark.

## 4 Software development

This section outlines the requirements for software development to incorporate the MSA beef grading software and MSA sheepmeat grading software into on-plant systems, including the licence approval process.

## 5 Livestock supply

This section outlines the requirements for supplying eligible MSA cattle and sheep.

## 6 Saleyards

This section outlines requirements for supplying eligible MSA cattle and sheep using a saleyard pathway.

## 7 Processors

This section outlines quality management system responsibilities of a MSA licensed beef and/or sheepmeat processor.

## 8 Independent boning rooms & portion cutting operations

This section outlines the independent boning room and portion cutting operation requirements for MSA.

## 9 Brand owners

This section outlines the brand owner requirements for MSA.

## 10 MSA end users

This section outlines the responsibilities of a MSA licensed end user (multi-site, retail, wholesaler, supermarkets & foodservice).

## 11 Compliance and audit requirements

This section outlines how the integrity of the MSA Trade Mark is maintained at MSA licensed Enterprises.

## MSA Standards by participant category

	Participant category						
	Registered producer /Lot feeder / Agent	Licensed software-development	Licensed saleyard	Licensed processor	Licensed Independent boning room / portion cutting operation	Licensed brand owner	Licensed end user
1 Introduction, definitions and application	CHECK	CHECK	CHECK	CHECK	CHECK	CHECK	CHECK
2 Schedule of fees		CHECK	CHECK	CHECK	CHECK		
3 Licence and trade mark		CHECK	CHECK	CHECK	CHECK	CHECK	CHECK
4 Software development		CHECK		CHECK			
5 Livestock supply	CHECK						
6 Saleyards			CHECK				
7 Processors		CHECK		CHECK		CHECK	
8 Independent boning rooms and portion cutting operations				CHECK	CHECK	CHECK	
9 MSA brand owners						CHECK	CHECK
10 MSA end users							CHECK
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# 1 Introduction

The Meat Standard Australia (MSA) Standards Manual is divided into a number of sections. Each section is a standalone document that is issued and amended independently of the other sections.

The Australian Meat Industry Language and Standards Committee (AMILSC) is the custodian of the MSA Standards.

All sections of the MSA Standards Manual must be used collectively. Certain sections may not be applicable for a specific business, operation, facility or activity. It is the user's responsibility to determine which section is appropriate for their operation.

## 1.1 Instructions for control of this document

This Standards Manual, available online from MSA, is a controlled document.

Updates to this Standard will occur from time to time. All printed and/or saved copies are uncontrolled and may not be the latest version.

## 1.2 Owner confirmation

The owner or controller, as registered with the Authorised Authority, shall be informed of any updates relating to the information contained in this Standard. Attached to any updates regarding this Standard will be a form for notification of changes to the owner or controller of the Standard.

## 1.3 Amendments and updates

Amendments to this Standard will be issued by way of a formal amendment notification where required.

## 1.4 Document control confirmation

### Change history

Date	Change description	Issue no.
03 May 2013	Initial draft	0.1
18 July 2013	Second draft	0.2
03 September 2013	Third draft	0.3
27 November 2013	Initial release	1.0
24 February 2016	Second release Updated signature in forward to reflect current MLA General Manager responsible for MSA program	2.0
15 February 2016	Third release Updated signature in forward to reflect current General Manager responsible for the MSA program	3.0
March 2020	Updated due to MSA model 2.0 release	4.0
June 2025	Update to reflect release of MSA Sheepmeat model V3.0, inclusion of objective measurement devices and current MLA General Manager	5.0

## 1.5 Definitions and glossary

In these Standards and appendices, where commencing with a capital letter:

**'Agent'** means a stock and station agent who is registered and trained with MLA to conduct the sale of MSA eligible consignments of livestock.

**'Audit'** means a systematic and independent examination to verify that an Enterprise MSA licensee is acting in accordance with these Standards.

**'Auditor'** is a person approved by an Authorised Authority to conduct audits.

**'AUS-MEAT'** means AUS-MEAT Limited ABN 44 082 528 881.

**'Authorised Authority'** means MLA or an organisation authorised to act on behalf of MLA in relation to the MSA program.

**'Brand owner'** means a MSA licensee who has a licensed brand with MLA.

**'Butcher body'** means a beef carcass representing sides, quarters or portions greater than primal cuts, supplied to MSA licensed end users that have met MSA grading requirements and have been identified accordingly.

**'CASO'** means the Chiller Assessment Standards Officer.

**'CMQ4'** means a clipped score from one (lowest) to 100 (highest) representing the consumer eating quality score for a cut by cook method, determined by impact of carcass measurements on tenderness, juiciness, flavour and overall liking of eating quality.

**'Development'** has the meaning given to it in the licence.

**'Eligible consignments'** means livestock eligible for certification under these Standards.

**'Enterprise'** means any Enterprise or Entity Name as shown on the MSA licence agreement that holds an MSA licence.

**'End user'** means an Enterprise whose business is primarily wholesaling meat or selling meat to consumers.

**'Food service outlet'** means an Enterprise whose business is primarily the supply of cooked beef and/or sheepmeat to consumers.

**'Grader'** means a person who has completed MSA grader training and is eligible to grade carcasses according to the MSA Standard.

**'Independent boning room'** defines a facility that receives carcasses, performs boning operations and/or portioning and packs MSA products.

**'Integrated Plant Software System'** means the incorporation of the MSA grading program into existing on-plant information technology systems.

**'JAS-ANZ'** means the Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand.

**'MAP'** means Modified Atmospheric Packaging with 80% Oxygen: 20% Carbon Dioxide mix.

**'MLA'** means Meat & Livestock Australia Limited ABN 39 081 678 364.

**'MQ4'** means a score from one (lowest) to 100 (highest) representing the consumer eating quality score for a cut by cook method, determined by impact of carcass measurements on tenderness, juiciness, flavour and overall liking of eating quality.

**'MSA'** means Meat Standards Australia, an MLA operated program.

**'MSA Certified Product'** means beef or sheepmeat compliant with these Standards.

**'MSA Certified Supplier'** means an Enterprise or other entity licensed to use the MSA Trade Mark.

**'MSA coordinator'** means an individual, accredited by an Authorised Authority, whom has demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the Authorised Authority, the levels of competency required for the position for which they are accredited.

**'MSA model (beef) v2.0'** means the MSA beef grading model released in 2019, replacing v1.7 released in 2013.

**'MSA model (sheepmeat) v3.0'** means the MSA sheepmeat cuts-based grading model initially released in 2025.

**'MSA sheepmeat pathway 2005'** means the 2005 release of Eating Quality of Australian Lamb & Sheepmeat.

**'MSA grading software'** means the MSA grading software, including the algorithms, used to determine the eating quality potential of beef or sheepmeat carcasses.

**'MSA Index'** means a number value, from one (lowest) to 100 (highest), which represents the potential eating quality of a MSA compliant beef carcass, derived from a weighted average of a selection of cut by cook outcomes using measurement inputs managed by a producer.

**'MSA Opportunity Index'** means a number value, from one (lowest) to 100 (highest), which represents the potential eating quality MSA Index which would be allocated to an MSA compliant beef carcass if the reasons for non-compliance were rectified. This uses measurement inputs managed by a producer.

**'MSA Processor Index'** means a number value, from one (lowest) to 100 (highest), which represents the potential eating quality of a MSA compliant beef carcass, derived from a weighted average of a selection of cut by cook outcomes using all measurement inputs including processor interventions.

**'MSA Sheepmeat Index'** means a number value, from one (lowest) to 100 (highest), which represents the potential eating quality of a MSA compliant sheepmeat carcass, derived from a weighted average of a selection of cut by cook outcomes using the measurement inputs managed by a producer.

**'MSA Sheepmeat Opportunity Index'** means a number value, from one (lowest) to 100 (highest), which represents the potential eating quality MSA Index which would be allocated to an MSA compliant sheepmeat carcase if the reasons for non-compliance were rectified. This uses measurement inputs managed by a producer.

**'MSA Sheepmeat Processor Index'** means a number value, from one (lowest) to 100 (highest), which represents the potential eating quality of a MSA compliant sheepmeat carcase, derived from a weighted average of a selection of cut by cook outcomes using all measurement inputs including processor interventions.

**'MSA licence'** means the licence issued by MLA to enable use of all MSA Trade Marks and/or MSA software, as set out in the terms and conditions within the 'licence agreement'.

**'MSA licensee'** means an Enterprise, including any processor, independent boning room, portion cutting facility, brand owner, retailer, wholesaler, multi-site Enterprise, food service Enterprise or saleyard, which has a licence from MLA to use MSA Trade Marks and/or MSA software.

**'MSA operator'** means an Enterprise which is responsible for the preparation, maintenance and issuing of Enterprise specific plant boning run configuration files (known as PBRs).

**'MSA optimisation'** means individually customised system of sorting beef carcasses based on stakeholder market requirements.

**'MSA PBR Configuration JSON File'** means the configuration file, used by MSA data capture units and Integrated Plant Software Systems, which defines the company grading requirements and MSA cut by cook stratification rules to sort beef and sheepmeat carcasses into specific boning room groupings.

**'MSA PBR grading data'** means the individual beef and sheepmeat carcase attributes, compiled into grading data, which are then uploaded via myMSA. All data has the primary processor code (MSA licence for the processor), kill date and plant issued body number.

**'MSA product'** means beef or sheepmeat product that meets all requirements of the MSA program.

**'Multi-site Enterprise'** means a licensed business which has a head office, distribution centre or a number of distribution centres which supply product to its own retail, supermarket or food service outlets.

**'Nominated person'** is a person nominated by the MSA licensee who has the responsibility of ensuring these Standards are applied in the MSA licensee's operations.

**'Objective measurement technology'** means a device or technology that has met Industry standards for commercial use and is endorsed by Australia Meat Industry Language and Standards Committee (AMILSC) and used on beef or sheepmeat carcasses.

**'Operative'** means any person carrying out tasks relating to the MSA system at an Enterprise.

**'Participant'** means a participant in the MSA program, whether licensed or not.

**'Plant Boning Run (PBR)'** is a term used to describe the customised company (processor, operator or brand owner) MSA cut by cook groupings.

**'Plant Boning Run (PBR) value'** defines the term used to describe the specific value assigned to a group of graded carcasses from customised company (processor, operator) MSA cut cook groupings. The value is prefixed with the processor/ operator code (MSA licence number for the processor/operator) and the second is the Plant Boning Run number (e.g. 9999- 1, 9999-2, 9999-3 etc.).

**'Portion cutting operations'** means an Enterprise whose business is the alteration of MSA Certified Product from its original received state.

**'Processor'** means an AUS-MEAT accredited Enterprise which slaughters livestock, or slaughters and bones or slaughters, bones and value adds.

**'Quality Management System'** means the quality assurance system prepared and adopted by an Enterprise, in accordance with an Authorised Authority's MSA program requirements.

**'Quality Management System Manual'** means the documentation detailing how the quality system is controlled, maintained and improved at an Enterprise in accordance with its Quality Management System.

**'Reason for non-compliance'** means a code to identify the reason for which a carcase has failed a minimum MSA requirement.

**'Retailer'** means an end user whose business is the general supply of uncooked beef and/or sheepmeat to consumers.

**'Saleyard'** means an Enterprise whose business is the supply of a facility for the sale of livestock by auction or other methods.

**'Software developer'** means a person or a company, which have been licensed by MLA, giving them rights to develop MSA grading software for use by MSA licensees.

**'Supermarket'** means an end user whose business is generally supplying uncooked, pre-packaged product to consumers along with other grocery items.

**'Trade mark'** means a symbol or words legally registered trade marks of MLA, relating to the MSA program which includes those specified in these Standards.

**'Ungrade'** means a carcase which fails to meet minimum MSA requirements. Also referred to as 'PBR99'.

**'Wholesaler'** means an end user whose business is the general supply of uncooked beef and/or sheepmeat to other businesses for resale or processing.



## 1.6 Application

These Standards came into effect in July 2025 and must be read in conjunction with the conditions of an Enterprise's MSA license. These Standards relate to version 2.0 of the MSA model for beef, 2005 release of Eating Quality of Australian Lamb and Sheepmeat and version 3.0 of the MSA model for sheepmeat.

## 1.7 Variation

MLA reserves the right to alter these Standards. Notice of these changes will be provided to all Enterprises. Alterations take effect 7 days, or any other date specified, after MLA sends notification of changes.

Please note alterations take effect despite any accidental failure to give notice to any.

## 1.8 Indemnity

The Enterprise indemnifies each Authorised Authority against all damages, losses, costs and expenses incurred by the Authorised Authority arising from:

- a. Any non-compliance by the Enterprise with an Authorised Authority's requirements or these Standards; or
- b. Any act or omission of the Enterprise in connection with Authorised Authority's requirements or these Standards.

## 1.9 Use of information

The Enterprise acknowledges that MLA may use information concerning the Enterprise, or the business of the Enterprise, obtained in connection with these Standards in such manner as MLA considers appropriate for the MSA program.

## 1.10 Privacy policy

MLA's privacy policy can be found at [www.mla.com.au/general/privacy](http://www.mla.com.au/general/privacy). MLA acknowledges that it will comply with the terms of its privacy policy.

## 1.11 Rights of entry

The Enterprise must, for the purposes of reviewing the Enterprise's compliance with an Authorised Authority's requirements or these Standards:

- a. Permit each Authorised Authority and auditor to audit the Enterprise's Quality Management System and view and take samples, of product held by the Enterprise;
- b. Provide any assistance reasonably required by an Authorised Authority or auditor;
- c. Produce to each Authorised Authority or auditor all information, records or documents requested to facilitate an audit;
- d. Provide each Authorised Authority with access to the Enterprise's premises (and any other premises controlled by the Enterprise or an agent of the Enterprise) at times reasonably required by an Authorised Authority for the purposes of reviewing the compliance with an Authorised Authority's requirements or these Standards.

## 1.12 Suspension or termination

An Authorised Authority may request MLA to terminate an Enterprise's MSA licence in accordance with the terms and conditions of that licence.

## 1.13 Dispute resolution

If the Enterprise requires resolution of a dispute under these Standards it must, before seeking any other resolution, immediately submit full details of the dispute to the Authorised Authority.

If the dispute is not resolved within 14 days the Enterprise may request the President of the Law Society of New South Wales to appoint an expert to determine the dispute. In making a determination, the expert acts as an expert and not as an arbitrator. The expert's decision is conclusive, final and binding on the parties (except in the case of manifest). The parties must pay the costs of the determination as determined by the expert.