

**GUIDELINES FOR SHELF-LIFE DATE LABELING
FOR IMPORTED MEAT**

November 1996

Japan Meat Traders Association

GUIDELINES FOR SHELF-LIFE DATE LABELING FOR IMPORTED MEAT

The objective of these guidelines is to enable persons importing meat to scientifically and rationally set quality retention periods when labeling imported meat as prescribed in Article 5, Paragraph 1, Subparagraph 1, (□) of the Enforcement Regulations relating to Article 11 of the Food Sanitation Law so as thereby to enable imported meat to be suitably used by the consumer, users, etc., and for its safety and sanitation to be ensured.

I. Methodology for Establishing Durability Periods

When labeling the quality retention limit on imported meat (only meat cuts partially frozen or frozen which have been packaged, same as below), the period obtained by any of the following methods shall be labeled as the "date of minimum durability". When that period is less than three months, labels shall include the day, month, and year, and when over three months, the month and year, or the day, month, and year.

Note that the methods shown here are standard, but other scientific, rational methods may be used to set the period in question.

1. Method of Setting Labeled Period Based on Shelf-Life Tests

The shelf-life of imported meat shall be determined by one of the following methods. The period obtained by multiplying the shelf-life by a factor for safety (hereinafter referred to as the "safety factor") of 0.8, shall be used as the date of minimum durability. Note that the shelf-life in this case shall be calculated using the date of processing (hereinafter referred to as the "processing date") as day 1.

1) Method of Determining Shelf-Life by Establishing Inspection

Dates at Predetermined Intervals

A suitable number of specimens of meat shall be taken from the same lot and stored at freely set temperature conditions. Three specimens each shall be inspected for each inspection item listed in section II.3 immediately after import and on each subsequently arbitrarily set inspection date. The period until the inspection date, immediately before the inspection date, on which an abnormality is observed in any of the inspection items, in even one specimen, shall be the shelf-life.

2) When Shelf-Life Can be Projected by Past Experience, Test Results, Etc.

A suitable number of specimens of meat shall be taken from the same lot and stored at freely set temperature conditions. Three specimens shall be inspected for each inspection item given in section II.3 immediately after import. The remaining specimens shall continued to be stored under the same conditions. The inspections given in section II.3 shall be conducted each day from the day on which signs of deterioration of quality appear in an organoleptic (sensory) inspection. The period until the inspection date, immediately before the inspection date, on which an abnormality is observed in any of the inspection items shall be the shelf-life.

2. Method Referring to Exporting of Processor / Company Date

1) When the quality retention / shelf-life period is indicated by the processor etc. of the exporting country, this may be referred to.

2) When data on the shelf-life is supplied from the processor etc. of the exporting country, this may be referred to in setting the labeled period. In this case, like in the above 1, the period obtained by multiplying the supplied shelf-life by a safety factor of 0.8 shall be labeled as the date of minimum durability. It must be confirmed by the test method shown in section II that the meat is suitable for consumption within that period.

3. Method Referring to Table for Labeling of Periods

In addition to the above methods 1 and 2, it is possible to refer to the "Table for Shelf-Life Labeling of Periods Relating to Imported Meat" in the " date of minimum durability " section. In this case, the stated number of days can be added to the date of processing, treated as day 1 to set the period to be labeled as the date of minimum durability.

Note that it must be confirmed by the "organoleptic test" shown in section II.3 that the meat is suitable for consumption within the labeled period.

"Table for Shelf-Life Labeling of Periods Relating to Imported Meat"

Meat type	Storage temperature	Packaging type	Country of origin	Date of minimum durability
Beef	0°C	Vacuum packaging	U.S. Australia New Zealand	62 days 77 days (under study)
	-15°C or less	Packaging type not relevant	All countries	24 months
Pork	0°C	Vacuum packaging	U.S. Canada Taiwan	40 days 40 days 42 days
	-15°C or less	Packaging type not relevant	All countries	24 months
Chicken, mutton, and horsemeat	-15°C or less	Packaging type not relevant	All countries	24 months

Notes: 1. The date of minimum durability in the above table is the period obtained by multiplying the shelf-life obtained based on the processing date (packaging date or slaughtering date) multiplied by a safety factor of 0.8. In labeling, the period obtained by adding the said number of days above to the processing date, day 1, shall be labeled by the day, month, and year (when the period is over three months, month and year also acceptable).

Notes:2. The date of minimum durability shows the period during which it is deemed that the quality of meat, as food, can be retained when stored under predetermined conditions (temperature). Changes in the storage conditions sometimes cause a shortening of the allowable storage period, or deterioration of quality within the period.

Notes:3. When a meat product cannot be categorized in this table, or when labeling product with a period exceeding the date of minimum durability shown in the table, be sure to determine the shelf-life and set the period based on the test method shown in section II.

Notes:4. The dates of minimum durability shown in the table etc. have been prepared based on current data, as of October 1996, and may be changed in the future.

II. Test Method of Shelf-Life of Meat

The test method shown here sets the standard test methods for determining the shelf-life and establishes the quality retention periods for labeling imported meat. In addition to the method shown here, other scientific, rational methods may be used to set the period.

1. Form of Meat Used For Testing

Imported packaged meat cuts shall be categorized by the following characteristics:

- (1) Type of meat such as beef, pork, or chicken
- (2) Type of storage state such as refrigeration or freezing
- (3) Type of packaging such as vacuum packaging, vacuum-gas backfill system, etc.
- (4) Type of processing such as heating, boiled in brine, etc.

2. Storage Temperature at Time of Testing

Any temperature suitable for the storage and distribution of imported meat (for example, refrigerated meat: 0°C and frozen meat: -15°C or less)

3. Test Items and Judgement Criteria

A. Organoleptic Test

Four items, 1) color and gloss, 2) appearance, 3) dripping, and 4) odor, shall be evaluated. The meat shall be judged abnormal if any of the above items test positive.

B. Bacteriological Test

The bacteriological test shall be performed by the TTC (2,3,5-triphenyl chloride) test. If positive, the meat shall be judged abnormal. Provided, however, that if the judgement is difficult in the TTC test, the bacteria count shall be examined. If over $10^8/g$, the meat shall be judged abnormal.

C. Physiochemical Test

A volatile basic nitrogen test shall be performed. If exceeding the following standard value, the meat shall be judged abnormal:

- o Volatile basic nitrogen (VBN): Less than 30 mg%

4. Test and Inspection Method (Deleted)

Instruction for testing.