

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

Establishment in November 1996

Revisions in October 2023

Japan Meat Traders Association

The objective of these guidelines is to enable persons importing meat to scientifically and rationally set quality retention periods when labeling imported meat in accordance with Article 19 of the Food Sanitation Act 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 continue 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.

## **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. From 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 site of meat, viscera
- (3) Type of storage state such as refrigeration or freezing
- (4) Type of packaging such as vacuum packaging, vacuum-gas backfill system, 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.

## **4. Test and Inspection Method**

(Instruction for testing and inspection)

The rest is omitted.