

The Use of the Canadian Pork Carcass Grading System to Target Specific Weights of Commercial and Retail Pork Cuts

André Fortin, Alan K.W. Tong, Wayne M. Robertson,
Stanley J. Landry and Sophie M. Zawadski

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Lacombe Research Centre, 6000 C&E Trail, Lacombe, AB
T4L 1W1; *Email*: fortinaa@em.agr.ca

The current Canadian grading system for pork carcasses was designed as a mean for reaching a financial settlement between the producer and the abattoir. Warm carcass weight and saleable meat yield estimated from the fat thickness and muscle depth at the 3/4 last ribs 7 cm off the exposed surface of the split mid-line are incorporated into a settlement grid which then generates an index. In Alberta, several settlement grids are used. In these grids, the main feature that differentiates them is the warm carcass weight range at which the optimum index can be achieved. Therefore, by favouring one settlement grid over another one it is then possible to target the carcass weight range that will best meet the requirements of a given market.

Pork carcass cut-out research at the Lacombe Research Centre illustrates well the use of various settlement grids to target specific warm carcass and cut weight requirements. For instance, three grids currently used by the Western Hog Exchange each have a different warm carcass weight range at which the optimum index can be realised, namely 77.0-82.9, 83.0-87.9 and 90.0-94.9 kg. As expected, as warm carcass weight increases the weight of the various cuts also increases. Just to name a few, the average weights for the outside muscle of the ham were respectively 1.66, 1.74 and 1.84 kg; the boneless back 4.25, 4.46 and 4.73 kg; the trimmed picnic 2.44, 2.52 and 2.83 kg; and the boneless capicola 1.77, 1.87 and 2.01 kg. By knowing the weight requirements of individual cuts for a given market it is then possible to identify the warm carcass weight range that will maximise the production of these particular cuts.

Implications: A retailer, knowing the relationship between warm carcass weight and the weights of the individual retail cuts, can then identify the warm carcass weight range that will maximise the production the type of cuts desired for his given market. That information can then be relayed by the retailer back to the abattoir and producers who can then use an already existing settlement grid, or generate a new one, that will maximise the production of carcasses of the desired weight range.