



Destination Examination – Fresh or Frozen Products

I. Purpose

This document provides procedures for performing a destination examination on fresh RTC or frozen RTC and RTE products.

II. Policy

A destination examination is a third-party evaluation performed by USDA, AMS graders (graders) that can be requested when the condition of livestock and poultry products has been questioned at the point of delivery. The grader examines the product for quality and organoleptic factors which are summarized in a written examination report, [QAD 545A: Destination Examination Report](#) following the examination. This final examination of commodity products determines whether products have arrived at destination in an acceptable/satisfactory condition, have not been tampered with, and are ready for further distribution. Each destination examination can also serve as a valuable opportunity to hear the concerns of the recipient and have a discussion about product quality.

III. Procedures

A. Examination Requests

A destination examination may be requested for one or more of the following attributes listed below. Graders must work with their supervisor to coordinate the logistics of the destination examinations such as time, location, point of contact and completion of the [LP-109: Application for Service](#). At the request of the recipient or supplying vendor, additional attributes not listed below, may be examined. The grader may use their discretion to focus the examination on the attribute(s) of the product being questioned. When certain attributes are not examined, graders must mark that section as N/A for not applicable on the examination report.

Condition attributes:

1. The identity and quantity of the product.
2. The condition and type of shipping containers.
3. The internal temperature of the product.
4. The extent of visible damage from shifting pallets due to improper palletization/stacking or mishandling.
5. The organoleptic condition of fresh or frozen product including examination for evidence of temperature abuse or contamination with foreign materials.



B. Shipping Documents

Obtain the shipping certificate (LP-210P) or Certificate of Conformance (COC) and bill of lading which accompanied the shipping container. Verify that the seal numbers are the same as shown on the certificate. Load information including the shipping date, destination examination location, shipping facility location, production location, seal number, purchase order number, sales order number, and item number should be transferred to the appropriate fields on the examination report.

C. Attribute Examinations

1. Container Quantity

The total number of containers for each destination examination will be verified by the grader. The total must be recorded in the appropriate field on the examination report. If this number does not match the total stated on the shipping certificate and/or the bill of lading, a note will be made in the remarks. When applicable, record the total pounds of the load by multiplying the total number of cases by the labeled net weight of each case.

An official recount is required when the delivery vehicle arrives with broken or missing seals or other evidence of suspected tampering. In this case, graders must personally count all containers on the unit and record any evidence of tampering found. If necessary, note the number of cases short and the total pounds short on the report.

2. Packaging/Packing

Determine the condition of the packaging/packing of the product using the method and appropriate form for lot sampling outlined in [QAD 617: Packaging and Packing](#). Final examination results must be transferred to the examination report. When product is also being examined for temperature, the samples used for this examination may also be used for temperature.

3. Temperature

Determine the internal temperature of the product by using the method outlined in [QAD 613: Frozen Product Examination](#). Holes in the primary packaging resulting from these examinations are to be covered using the self-adhesive label markers used to identify official samples. Remove any moisture or frost from the area to be covered prior to affixing the label. Record the results of temperature examination in the remarks section of the examination report.

Frozen product must arrive at destination at an average internal product temperature not to exceed 10°F (-12.2°C), with no individual temperature exceeding 15°F (-9.4°C). Fresh product must arrive at destination at an average internal product temperature between 26°F (-3.3°C) and 40°F (4.4°C). Product not meeting these criteria is to be rejected and handled as outlined in [Section E](#) of this procedure.



4. Palletization/Stacking or Other Mishandling of Product

Improper palletization, stacking, and mishandling can result in damage to the product. Graders must visually examine the entire load to determine if any pallets are leaning and/or if any cases on the lower layers have been damaged. Leaning pallets not only indicate that product may have shifted during transport, but unstable pallets cause issues for the recipient when putting product into storage.

Destination examinations can be requested due to obvious damage noticed by the recipient. Graders are encouraged to take numerous pictures of affected product to document the issue in a visual format. In these instances, the grader should use their discretion to determine whether a stationary lot examination is necessary to assess the condition of the entire load. If a stationary lot examination is deemed unnecessary due to obvious product damage on a portion of the load, graders must work with the facility staff to assess the entire load and segregate the affected product from the acceptable product. The total quantity of damaged containers and remaining acceptable product should be recorded in the remarks so that a partial rejection may occur. Damaged product should be handled as outlined in [Section D.2.](#) of this procedure.

5. Organoleptic Condition, Temperature Abuse, and Contamination

Graders must use sensory observation to examine the product for any organoleptic defects using the method outlined in [QAD 614: Organoleptic Examination](#) using [QAD 615: Lot Definition](#) to determine the appropriate containers to sample. If a recipient has requested a destination examination due to specific organoleptic attributes of the product, graders must investigate those specific attributes and provide their determination. If a microwave oven is available, this may involve thawing or reheating the product to facilitate a proper organoleptic examination or observation for internal contamination of foreign materials.

Frozen RTC products contain a normal amount of purge within the package that may appear opaque clear to yellowish/pinkish which is acceptable. Frozen RTE and RTC products normally have a thin layer of white frost on the product within the bag as a result of the normal freezing process which is also acceptable. If the recipient has requested the destination examination due to suspected temperature abuse such as thawing and refreezing, graders must perform a stationary lot examination for freezing defects. Generally, due to variation in product packaging and product type, evidence of thawing and refreezing is very subjective, partially thawed product would be the main indicator. Product may also be frozen or stuck inside the cases due to condensation forming on thawing product and refreezing. Due to the difficult nature of making this determination, graders are encouraged to take photos of the product and confer with their supervisor. Their supervisor may then consult with their Regional and National Office to make a final determination.

Generally, it is unlikely that product will thaw and refreeze during shipment. Product frozen to 0°F takes a long time to thaw depending on the ambient air temperature. Trailers with freezer units which are designed to hold temperature are incapable of significantly lowering the temperature of product



enough to functionally refreeze thawed product. The bill of lading would show the shipping date indicating how many days the product has been in transit.

D. Destination Examination Report Submittal

The grader must sign and date the completed report and email it to their supervisor. The supervisor will forward a copy to the national office. Graders must maintain a copy of the report in their personal records and supervisors must file a digital copy of the report in shared folders as specified by their Regional Office. All records should be destroyed 1 year after the close of the fiscal year in which they were created.

1. Acceptable Findings

For acceptable shipments, the grader performing the destination examination must place the following statement in the *Remarks* Section of the examination report:

“Product represented by this report was examined and was found to be in acceptable condition.”

2. Unacceptable Findings

For destination examinations that resulted in unacceptable product, the grader must immediately notify their supervisor via phone and email the examination report along with any photos of defective product. They should remain onsite until given further guidance. When necessary, the supervisor or Regional Office may coordinate with the National Poultry Office to make a final determination. The supplying vendor will be notified and given the opportunity to pick up any unacceptable product. The official stamps must be obliterated under the supervision of the grader on any product found to be out of compliance during the destination examination before the hold tape may be removed. Stamp obliteration may occur on-site at the destination or at the origin plant when the product is returned.

Destination Examination Reports covering unacceptable product must carry the following statement:

“Destination Examination – product covered by this report does not meet the requirements of the Commodity Specification.”

Also, include the reason for the rejection:

Example: High temperatures

“Product was found in unacceptable condition due to high temperature. Product temped was found to be at an average of 21°F when the FPPS requires product to be 10°F or below at destination.”

Example: Partial rejection due to damaged cases

“57 cases of product were found in unacceptable condition due to torn packaging/packing resulting in exposure of the product. The official stamps on the defective product cases were obliterated and the



product was disposed of at the warehouse under USDA supervision. The remaining 1,243 cases were found to be in acceptable condition.”

E. Reporting Billing Hours, Expenses, and Volume

For any new service locations, an LP-109 and LP-109A must be completed by the vendor with their billing information and destination examination location. The completed forms must be emailed to the Business Operations Branch (BOB) prior to providing service in order to create a request number (QAD.BusinessOps@usda.gov). When results of the destination exam determine that the product is unacceptable or a partial rejection occurs the fees, expenses, and associated costs for the examination must be billed to the vendor.

Alternatively, when results of the destination exam determine that the product is acceptable, the fees, expenses, and associated costs for the examination must be billed to Commodity Procurement (CP). The supervisor must email the BOB at the above email address requesting a new request number with the same work location using the CP billing account number.

The appropriate unscheduled request number acquired from the BOB must be used for entries in work reports and expense logs in ABI. State trust states must transfer the information from the LP-109 to their own equivalent form(s) and make appropriate entries into their work reports and expense logs. The volume of product examined must be recorded in ABI as “DE” in the “Acceptance Service” section and “NG Dest. Inspection” in the “Officially Graded” section.

IV. Supersedes

QAD 545 Procedure: *Poultry Condition Examination*, August 31, 2018.

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