

# The Value of Independence

MEAT AND LIVESTOCK COMMERCIAL SERVICES LTD (MLCSL)

# SHEEP

CARCASE  
AUTHENTICATION  
AND  
VERIFICATION  
SERVICES

	1	2	3L	3H	4L	4H	5
E							
U							
R							
O							
P							



# Sheep Carcase Classification for the Meat Industry

## Meat and Livestock Commercial Service Ltd (MLCSL) provides an Independent Authentication Service

An independent service is available to abattoirs to classify their sheep carcasses. MLCSL's technically trained staff have been classifying sheep carcasses since the early 1970's.

### What does the service provide?

The information provided by MLCSL's sheep carcase authentication service provides information to form part of the basis of the transaction between producers and abattoirs.

MLCSL is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board.

The service offers the industry highly trained and regularly monitored staff to independently establish the important carcase information as the basis for the transaction between the buyer and the seller.

The MLCSL's service includes:

**Identification** – Producer lots of sheep are identified and recorded providing a vital link in the chain of traceability.

**Category** – The category of the carcase: New Season Lamb (NSL), Old Season Lamb (OSL), Mature Sheep (MS), EWE and RAM.

**Dressing Specification** – Monitoring of dressing specifications, these are recorded for suppliers reference (see page 5).

**Carcase Weighing** – Carcases are weighed and recorded (see page 5 for hot weight rebates).

**Conformation** – (see page 3).

**Fatness** – (see page 3).

**Verification** – Daily audit checks on documentation to verify the recorded carcase information for supplier confidence, supported by six monthly management checks.

### Category

Clean sheep are classified into three categories: New Season Lamb (NSL), Old Season Lamb (OSL) or Mature Sheep (MS).

NSL are animals born and marketed within a year beginning on 1 January or born after the beginning of October in the year prior to marketing, OSL are other clean sheep with no permanent incisor teeth erupted and MS are clean sheep with one or more permanent incisor teeth erupted.

## Classification

**Fat class**  
Increasing fatness →

	1	2	3L	3H	4L	4H	5	
Conformation class ↑ Improving conformation	E	E1	E2	E3L	E3H	E4L	E4H	E5
	U	U1	U2	U3L	U3H	U4L	U4H	U5
	R	R1	R2	R3L	R3H	R4L	R4H	R5
	O	O1	O2	O3L	O3H	O4L	O4H	O5
	P	P1	P2	P3L	P3H	P4L	P4H	P5

## Conformation

The conformation class is determined by a visual appraisal of shape, taking into account carcass blockiness and fullness of the legs. No adjustment is made for the influence of fatness on overall shape.

There are five main classes: E, U, R, O, P, but traders in ewe carcasses may ask for class P to be divided into an upper (P+) and a lower (-P) band.

The conformation class is described first, followed by the fat class, eg R3L.

## Fatness

The fat class is determined by a visual appraisal of external fat development. There are five main classes ranging from 1 (very lean) to 5 (very fat). Classes 3 and 4 are sub-divided into L (leaner) and H (fatter).

## Standardisation of Sheep Carcass Classification

To ensure consistency of application of sheep carcass classification standards by MLCSL staff, various procedures are strictly applied for the operation of the scheme.

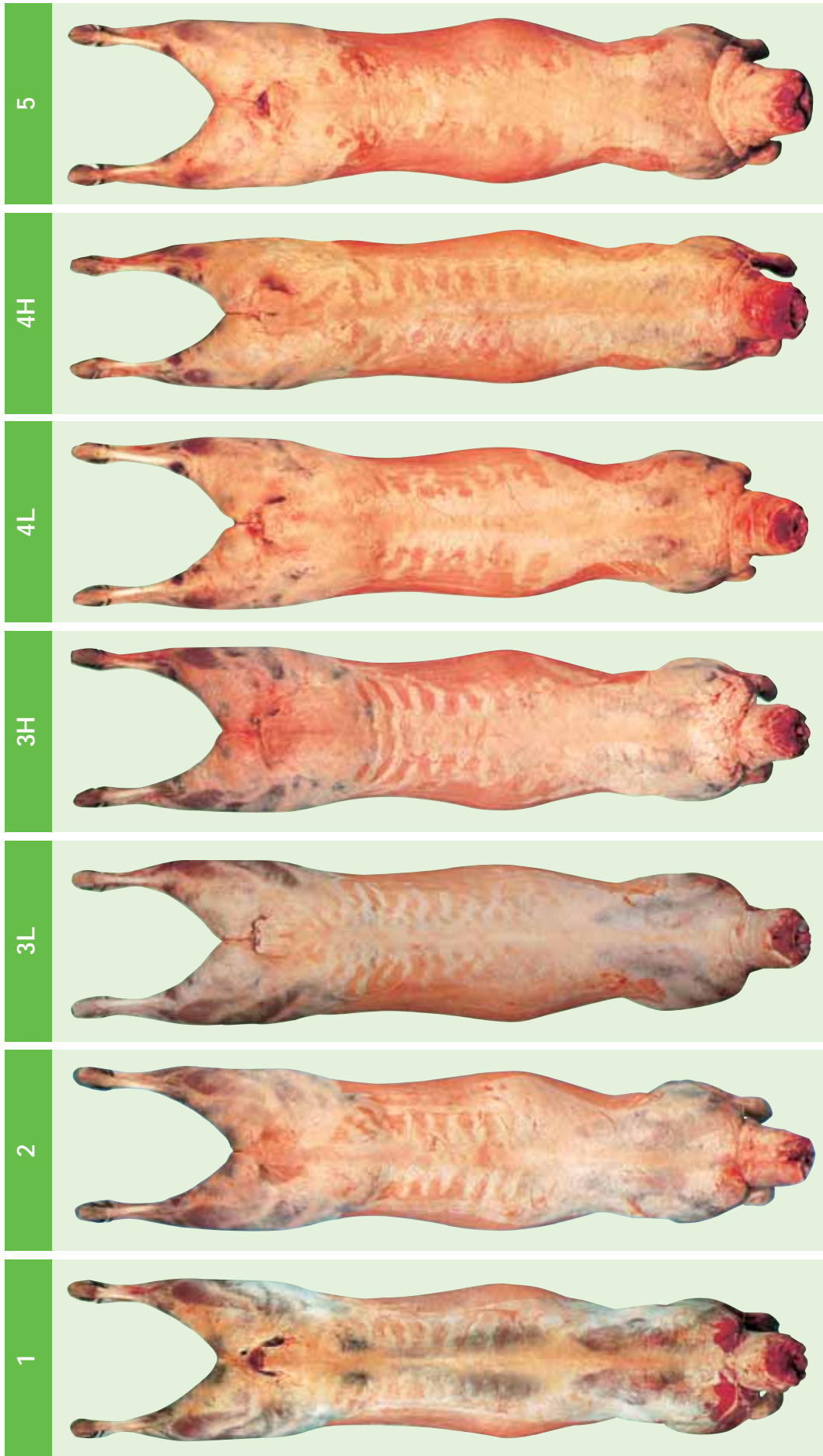
- Training programmes in plant and at MLCSL's training centre ensure that classifiers maintain the required standards of efficiency and accuracy.
- Classification checks are regularly undertaken by Managers, nominated checkers and other members of the management team including the Quality Manager providing a national link to ensure consistency of standards.

## Sheep Carcase Classification

Conformation classes – E, U, R, O and P



Fat classes – 1, 2, 3L, 3H, 4L, 4H and 5



## Dressing specifications

There are two industry agreed dressing specifications:

- MLC Standard
- Tail Removed

**MLC Standard specification** – What is removed/left in the carcase?

The following parts are removed from the carcase:

- Fleece, head, fore and hind feet, genitalia, contents of the abdominal and thoracic cavities.

The following are left in the carcase:

- Kidneys, kidney fat and diaphragm.

**Tail removed specification** – As above with the tail removed at the fifth sacral vertebra.

Any dressing specification that falls outside the agreed specifications is recorded as 'Company Spec'.

### MLC Standard Specification



### Tail Removed Specification



A 'company spec' sometimes used is 'Excluding Kidney Knob and Channel Fat'.

This equates to an average reduction in carcase weight of 0.5kg.

Trimming of neck and belly flaps also affects carcase weight and can be part of a 'company spec'.

Consistent Dressing Specifications are important, they have implications on the final carcase weight and the return to the supplier.

The Dressing Specification applied will be annotated on the MLC SL classification/kill sheets.

## Hot weight rebate

Hot weight rebates are used to establish a 'cold' carcase weight. They are applied to the carcasses weighed hot (within one hour of slaughter). This produces a cold weight on which the producer is paid. Rebates table shows differences between different scale calibrations.

Scales calibrated to 0.2kg		Scales calibrated to 0.5kg	
Hot weight (kg)	Rebate (kg)	Hot weight (kg)	Rebate (kg)
25.4 and under	0.5	25.5 and under	0.5
25.6 and over	1.0	26.0 and over	1.0

## The Value of Independence

MLCSL's Sheep Carcase Classification Scheme is an ideal tool to communicate clear descriptions of carcase specifications in the marketing chain.

MLCSL's service is the only UKAS accredited national provider of independent classification services.

MLCSL's UKAS accreditation gives the industry the following benefits:

- Provides assurance within the supply chain that the independent service follows a laid down code of practice.
- Gives confidence that its quality control systems operate to an agreed standard with regular monitoring, both internal and external.

The independent service also makes a major contribution to transparency throughout the supply chain providing confidence between producers and abattoirs. Regular performance monitoring ensures technical standards are delivered consistently across Great Britain by a dedicated team of Classifiers and Managers, providing confidence in the classification process thereby contributing to the effective marketing of the finished stock and the ultimate transaction between buyer and seller.




## Computerised Data Capture Record

MLC SHEEP-Carcase Service 09/02/11									
Participant		Lot Details			Centre			Supplier	
MLCSL MEATS STONELEIGH PARK KENTLWORTH MARKS		No. :1 Dress :MLC Std Size :010-010			Name.:STONELEIGH No. :1234 /0 Week No :12 Staff No.:			SMITH	
EarTag	Kill.	Cat	Hot (kg)	Reb (kg)	Cold (kg)	Cond (kg)	Net.C (kg)	Class	Remark
000001	OSL		21.6	0.5	21.1	0.0	21.1	O3L	TARE CHECK
000002	OSL		18.6	0.5	18.1	0.0	18.1	R3L	
000003	OSL		26.6	1.0	25.6	0.0	25.6	E5	
000004	OSL		17.8	0.5	17.3	1.0	16.3	U2	BRUISE
000005	OSL		21.4	0.5	20.9	0.0	20.9	U4L	
000006	OSL		25.6	1.0	24.6	1.5	23.1	U4H	LEG
000007	OSL		20.9	0.5	20.4	0.0	20.4	U3L	
000008	OSL		12.1	0.5	11.6	0.0	11.6	P	
000009	OSL		16.4	0.5	15.9	0.0	15.9	O2	
000010	OSL		20.6	0.5	20.1	0.0	20.1	R3L	
Total			195.6			2.5	193.1		
Brought Forward			0.0			0.0	0.0		
Total			195.6			2.5	193.1		

The carcasses on this form were classified by me at the centre shown above. The carcasses were dressed and the hot weight rebates were calculated in accordance with the Specification indicated above.

MLCSL's Independent Classification Services



OUR ASSURANCE  
YOUR CONFIDENCE

MLCSL Authenticated Classification Documents



# SHEEP

## CARCASE AUTHENTICATION AND VERIFICATION SERVICES



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