Carcass attributes recorded in the carcass classification system

1. Carcass mass
2. Age of the animal
3. Fat content of the carcass
4. Carcass conformation
5. Damage to the carcass
6. In the case of bulls in the B and C grades, the gender of the animal is recorded

Age of the animal

Dentition is used to divide carcasses into four age categories: A (0 teeth), AB (1 to 2 teeth), B (3 to 6 teeth) and C (more than 6 teeth). Ruminants cut their first set of permanent incisors (teeth) between the age of 1 and 2 years and when slaughtered are classified as AB age carcasses. The fourth incisor erupts at the age of between 3 and 4 years, and when slaughtered this will place the carcass in the C age category. Beef carcasses are classified as veal (calf) until the first pre-molar teeth erupt, normally between 5 and 6 months of age, these carcasses are classified as A carcasses.

Fat content

Following a visual assessment of carcass fat content and fat distribution by a trained official, carcasses are assigned to one of 7 fat classes (0 (no fat) to 6 (excessively fat)).

PRIMARY CUT USAGE

NECK
Use slices for potjiekos or a braised dish.
Serving a tender whole neck is very fashionable.

THICK RIB
Lamb thick rib chops are mostly grilled, while mutton thick rib chops are braised. Mutton can also be cut in cubes for stews, and lamb cubes can be used for kebabs.

SHOULDER
Deboned and rolled, the lamb shoulder can be oven-roasted, and the mutton shoulder pot-roasted. Debone and butterfly this cut for oven-roasting or grilling over the coals. Cubed meat can be used for kebabs.

BREAST AND FLANK
Deboned and cut into a rectangular shape it can be used for a roll. Rolls can be pot-roasted or cooked in aluminium foil. Salted ribs can be prepared from the rib portion, or cubes (25 mm) can be used for casseroles and stews. Deboned lamb breast, cut into 25 mm wide strips, can be used for concertina kebabs.

RIB
The rib ends of a whole rib of lamb can be Frenched (i.e. remove all cartilage, fat and meat from the first 2.5 cm of the rib ends) and used for oven roasts such as a rack or crown roast. Rib chops can be sawn for grilling.

LOIN
Oven-roast the loin, or cut chops for grilling. Alternatively, the loin can be deboned, rolled and secured with skewers. Cut through the meat between the skewers to make Saratoga chops for grilling, or remove the eye muscle, tie with a string at 25 mm intervals, and cut through the string to make noisettes.

LEG
The leg can be kept whole for pot-roasting with or without the bone. Debone the leg to make a roll, or for butterflying. Cubes can be cut for kebabs, and sliced shin is ideal for braises and stews.

CHUMP
Chump chops can be grilled or roasted.

SHANK
Cubes can be cut for kebabs, and sliced shin is ideal for braises and stews.
Serving whole lamb shanks is also very fashionable.

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Red meat carcasses are classified according to the South African carcass classification system indicated by roller-marks on the carcass. These coloured roller-marks which are sometimes visible on raw meat are completely harmless, and illustrate the age of the animal before slaughter as well as the fatness of the carcass.

Why classify carcasses?

During carcass classification each carcass is allocated a class code in a manner that does not imply that a carcass in one class is more or less desirable than a carcass in another class. Carcass grading however, grade carcass characteristics in order of merit and assumes that all buyers have the same preferences and needs. Carcass classification enables the buyer to select a carcass according to his own needs and preferences, according to the characteristics within a specific class. Consumers often prefer to make their own decisions as to what is desirable, and to choose what they want.

Why is some meat stamped?

- These stamps are used as an indicator by meat inspection officials who inspect, grade and approve all meat carcasses after slaughter.
- The stamps indicate the age of the animal, the fatness of the meat and an abattoir identification code to enable the traceability of the carcass.
- The stamps are applied as a roller mark to the whole carcass, and only some cuts will display this mark after processing into retail cuts.
- These coloured stamps on the flesh are completely harmless. They are made with edible vegetable dyes and disappear during cooking.

South African production systems

- More than 80% of lamb and mutton are pasture fed, which means they graze naturally on open fields.
- More than 60% of South African beef are produced on natural or cultivated pastures, with the majority finished off for two months in feedlots.
- Most of these animals are slaughtered as age A, fat code 2 carcasses (A2).
- The AB class specifically makes provision for cattle to be raised on veld to a marketable fat cover (fat code 2) because this acceptable fat cover is not achieved on most veld types without concentrate feeding.

REFERENCE:

National Department of Agriculture. 1990. Agricultural Product Standards Act, 1990 (Act No. 119 Of 1990) No. R. 342. Regulations Regarding the Classification and Marking of Meat.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN CARCASS CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

LAMB

Shin
Leg
Chump
Flank
Loin
Breast
Rib
Thick rib
Shoulder
Neck
Shin
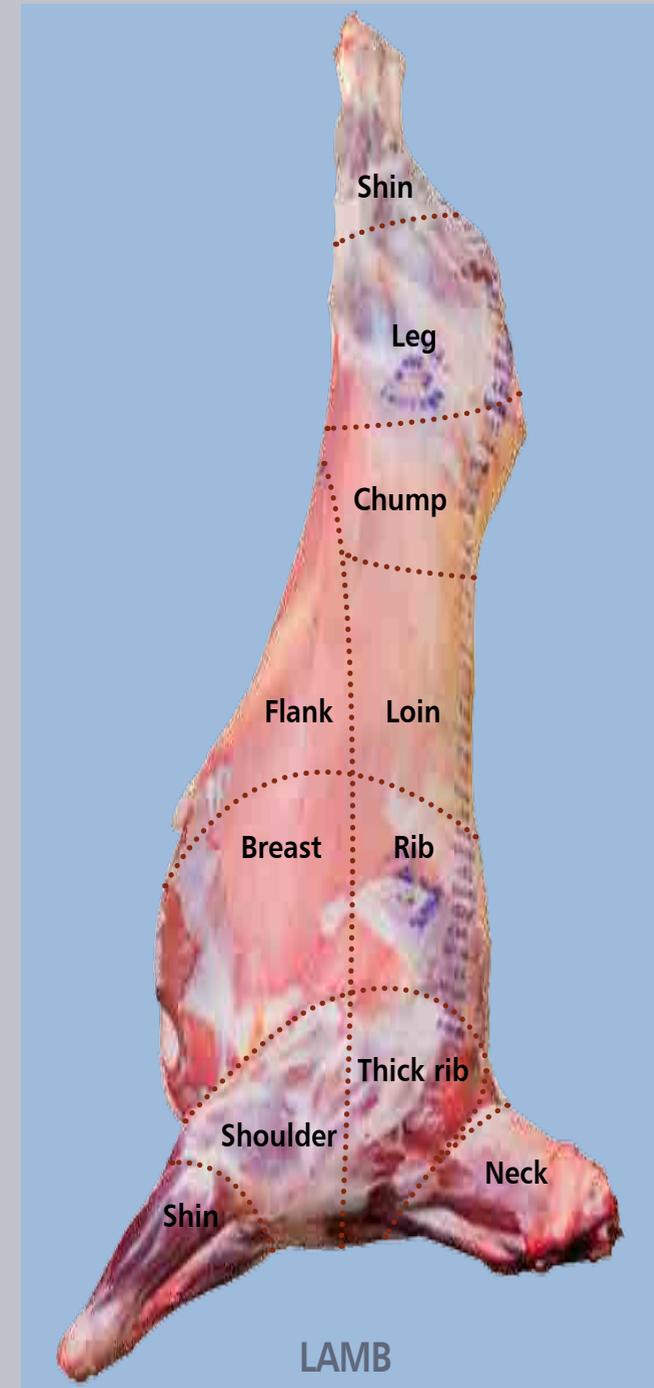
CARCASS AGE

A	(purple AAA roller mark)
	Meat from a young animal
AB	(green ABAB roller mark)
	Meat from slightly older animals
B	(brown BBB roller mark)
	Meat from an older animal
C	(red CCC roller mark)
	Meat from an old animal

Flavour · Tenderness

CARCASS FATNESS

0 (000 roller mark) - no visible fat
1 (111 roller mark) - very lean
2 (222 roller mark) - lean
3 (333 roller mark) - medium fat
4 (444 roller mark) - fat
5 (555 roller mark) - over-fat
6 (666 roller mark) - excessively fat

Fatness

HealthyMeat
HealthymeatZA

The South African Carcass Classification System has been in use since June 1992 (Agricultural Product Standards Act, 1990 (Act No.119 of 1990)) and classifies lamb, mutton, beef and goat carcasses based on a set of predefined characteristics.