

## SPECIFICATIONS FOR FRAME SIZE

**Large Frame:** Feeder Cattle which have typical minimum qualifications for this grade are thrifty, have large frames, and are tall and long bodied for their age. Steers would not be expected to produce the amount of external (subcutaneous) fat opposite the twelfth rib – usually about .5 inch – normally associated with the U.S. Choice Grade until their live weight exceeds 1,250 pounds. Heifers would not be expected to produce Choice carcasses until their live weight exceeds 1,150 pounds.

**Medium Frame:** Feeder Cattle which possess typical minimum qualifications for this grade are thrifty, have slightly large frames, and are slightly tall and long bodied for their age. Steers would be expected to produce U.S. Choice carcasses (about .5 inch fat at twelfth rib) at live weights of 1,100 to 1,250 pounds. Heifers would be expected to produce Choice carcasses at 1,000 to 1,150 pounds.

**Small Frame:** Feeder Cattle included in this grade are thrifty, have small frames, and are shorter bodied and not as tall as specified as the minimum for the Medium Frame grade. Steers would be expected to produce U.S. Choice carcasses (about .5 inch fat) at live weights of less than 1,100 pounds. Heifers would be expected to produce Choice carcasses at live weights of less than 1,000 pounds.

## SPECIFICATIONS FOR MUSCLE THICKNESS

**Number 1:** Feeder cattle which possess minimum qualifications for this grade usually display predominate beef breeding. They must be thrifty and moderately thick throughout. They are moderately thick and full in the forearm and gaskin, showing a rounded appearance through the back and loin with moderate width between the legs, both front and rear. Cattle show this thickness with a slightly thin covering of fat; however, cattle eligible for this grade may carry varying degrees of fat.

**Number 2:** Feeder Cattle which possess minimum qualifications for this grade usually show a high proportion of beef breeding and slight dairy breeding may be detected. They must be thrifty and tend to be slightly thick throughout. They tend to be slightly thick in the forearm and gaskin, showing a rounded appearance through the back and loin with slight width between the legs, both front and rear. Cattle show this thickness with a slightly thin covering of fat; however, cattle eligible for this grade may carry varying degrees of fat.

**Number 3:** Feeder Cattle which possess minimum qualifications for this grade are thrifty and thin through the forequarter and the middle part of the rounds. The forearm and gaskin are thin and the back and loin have a sunken appearance. The legs are set close together, both front and rear. Cattle show this narrowness with a slightly thin covering of fat; however, cattle eligible for this grade may carry varying degrees of fat.

**Number 4:** Feeder cattle included in this grade are thrifty animals, which have less thickness than the minimum requirements specified for the Number 3 Grade.

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*Special Thanks to Warren County Livestock, McMinnville, Tennessee.*

# Make the Grade!

## A Guide to USDA Grades for Cattle



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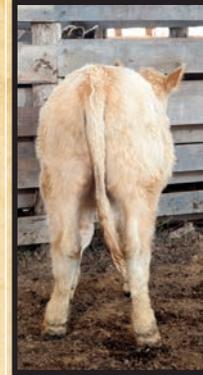
NUMBER 1

**LARGE FRAME**



*Large Frame Number 1*

**MEDIUM FRAME**



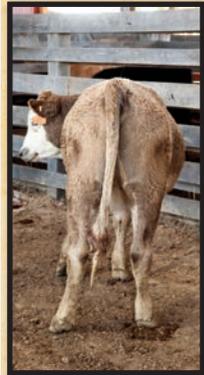
*Medium Frame Number 1*

**SMALL FRAME**



*Small Frame Number 1*

NUMBER 2



*Large Frame Number 2*

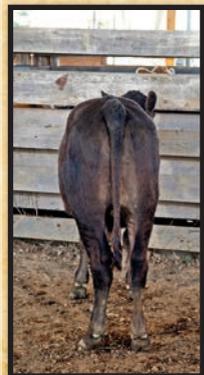


*Medium Frame Number 2*



*Small Frame Number 2*

NUMBER 3



*Large Frame Number 3*



*Medium Frame Number 3*

Tennessee's nationally respected livestock graders adhere to USDA guidelines when grading cattle and placing them in lots for sale. Understanding the qualities that are assessed by these highly trained graders and learning to recognize them yourself are important steps to bringing your herd up to grade 1 through improved genetics and best management practices.

Keep in mind that frame and muscling are only two of the factors that ultimately determine the value of feeder calves. Other factors that are considered include sex; condition; color; personal preference; horns; vaccinations; weight; background; fill; and breed.