



Pork Quality Targets

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The National Pork Producers Council’s Pork Quality Solutions Team has developed a series of pork quality targets. The targets represent minimums or ranges, as the case may be, for quality attributes in fresh pork loin measured at 24-hours post-mortem. These are simply rough targets at which different members of the pork chain can aim as they develop programs to improve pork quality. These are guidelines and reference numbers. These targets are not intended to be specifications nor are they standards for industry use. Specifications may develop from these targets but the targets are not intended to be used directly in this manner. Likewise, specific standards may be developed from these attributes, but these targets are not meant to be standards as published. Standards may vary depending upon market needs.

These targets are intended to be the cutting edge of measures for each parameter. Therefore, they are intended to be dynamic in nature, evolving as improvements are made over time.

Specific targets are not intended to be exact for all technologies available to measure that particular trait. For example, water-holding capacity is expressed generally as drip loss regardless of how that parameter is measured.

Attribute	Target	Comment
Color	3.0 to 5.0	utilizing a 6-point scale
pH	5.6 to 5.9	
Tenderness	<7 lb. (3.2 KG)	utilizing WBS at 7 days
Flavor	robust pork flavor	(no off-flavors)
Intramuscular Fat “Marbling”	2 to 4%	
Drip Loss	not to exceed 2.5%	

The Pork Quality Targets

Some targets are expressed as ranges due to the differences in needs of different segments. For example, intramuscular fat is expressed as a range with the minimum reflecting consumer retail purchase requirements and minimum product eating satisfaction requirements. The maximum reflects a compromise between expectations based upon nutritional and health concerns (lightly marbled) and the eating experience based upon maximum eating satisfaction (heavily marbled).

This fact sheet is not intended to identify causes of the varying levels of quality as exhibited by the variation in the measures for the different parameters. It is known that several factors are involved including on-farm considerations, transport issues, and factors involving the hog and the carcass at the packing plant.

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