



Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Fishing and Food Undersecretary of Agricultural Policy and Food National Food Administration	QUALITY PROTOCOL	
Code: SAA008	Version: 08	07-16-07

QUALITY PROTOCOL FOR *PROSCIUTTO* (Dry-cured ham)

MADE OFFICIAL ON: January 16, 2008

SAGPyA RESOLUTION Nr: 4/2008

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INTRODUCTION

Scope

This protocol defines and describes the quality attributes of *prosciutto* authorized to carry the “Argentine Food – A Natural Choice” Seal and its Spanish version.

The objective of this document is to provide *prosciutto* manufacturers in the Argentine Republic with an additional tool for obtaining differentiated quality products.

Being a dynamic document, this protocol may be periodically revised according to the needs of the public and/or the private sectors.

Producers aspiring to implement this protocol must take into account that compliance with current regulations for hams is implicit. These regulations are described in the Argentine Food Code - AFC - Chapter VI "Meat products and by-products", Art. 286 and 293, Chapter IV "Tools, recipients, containers, packaging, machinery and accessories", Chapter V Standards for Food Labeling and Advertising (Mercosur Technical Regulations for Packed Food Labeling Nr 26/03) and in Decree 4238/68 "Regulations for the Inspection of Products, By-products and Derivatives of animal origin". Likewise, companies must provide evidence of their compliance with Argentine labor laws.


Chapter VI of the AFC, Art. 286 – (Joint Resolutions SpyRS and SAGPyA Nr 056 and Nr 250 from 05.30.00), refers to products considered salted meat and their authorized additives.

Art 293 of the AFC defines *Prosciutto* as salted meat prepared with pork haunch that must be subjected to a maturing process, with or without authorized condiments, and with or without bone.

According to this protocol, *prosciutto* may be considered to have differentiated quality when it complies with additional attributes regarding product, process and packaging indicated herein.

General criteria

Differentiating attributes for *prosciutto* emerge from the analysis of information provided by specialized companies as well as by public and private entities related to this food production.

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Quality requirements from high demanding foreign markets have been considered in the elaboration of this document. Spanish regulations: *Real Decree 1781/2004 and Amendments and Specifications for the Manufacturing of Jamón Serrano* (Spanish *Prosciutto*) are reference regulations.

Analyses that may be required to test the process and product attributes defined in this document must be carried out following recognized official techniques, at laboratories belonging to official networks. In addition, companies must submit documentation informing periodicity of analysis and grounds for selecting their sampling methods.

In case other determinations (analytical, sensorial or process) are carried out as a result of external demands or as a consequence of the company internal controls that are not mentioned in this protocol, copy of related registers (internal and/or external) must be attached to the audit carried out for obtaining the "Argentine Food, A Natural Election" Seal.

GROUNDINGS FOR DETERMINING DIFFERENTIAL ATTRIBUTES

Product attributes


A clearly positive trend is observed in different markets relative to consumer preference for differentiated products as regards quality, manufacturing conditions and ingredients. Attributes defined for finished products are based on physicochemical and sensorial characteristics.

It must be pointed out that the following ingredients are obligatory for *Prosciutto* authorized to carry the quality seal: Pig hind legs, common A type "Cane" sugar (AFC - Art. 768 bis) and/or higher qualities (AFC – Art. 768), Sodium Nitrate and semi-fine salt, washed and purified for use in human food (CAA - Art.1266).

Optional ingredients:

- Antioxidants: such as sodium eritorbate, ascorbic acid or their mixtures.
- Selected spices irradiated.
- Meat cultures or starters.

The presence and use of any preservative not provided for in this protocol is prohibited.

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As pig hind legs are the main ingredient of this product, the quality of this meat is a differential factor of the product to be manufactured. For this reason, this document establishes parameters for pork raw meat that determine quality attributes contributing to the achievement of a differentiated final product.

Process attributes

Prosciutto manufacturers aspiring to obtain the “Argentine Food – A Natural Choice” Seal must implement the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points System (HACCP) from reception of raw material to obtainment of finished product.

Transportation and storage characteristics must comply with provisions contained in the proposed harmlessness and quality assurance system.

Control parameters to serve as a guide in the selection of raw materials for the manufacturing of *Prosciutto* must be defined, determining values and tolerance for each one of them.

It is of great importance that manufacturers of *Prosciutto* take action to guarantee environmental sustainability. To this end, it is recommended to apply the ISO Standard 14000 Series. Likewise, it is recommended to implement a Quality and Harmlessness Management system like ISO Standard 22000.

As regards traceability system, the company must provide evidence of its implementation and must adopt a code to enable tracing the product back to the raw material used to manufacture it.

Packaging attributes


Compliance with current packaging regulations in general. Characteristics that may ensure an optimal preservation of product quality will be considered differential packaging attributes.

However, the use of transparent packaging is deemed to enable better perception of product quality.

DIFFERENTIATING PROCESS ATTRIBUTES

Prosciutto manufacturers aspiring to obtain the “Argentine Food, A Natural Choice” Seal must comply with the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points System from reception of raw material to the final product to be sold.

1) Reception of Raw Material

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The reception of raw material (pig hind legs) is considered the most important part of the process, as final product characteristics depend upon the initial meat quality. In addition to control parameters defined down below, following are the main aspects to be taken into account in this stage:

- Selection and control of pig farms: pig growers are recommended to count with Letters of Guarantee (See Annex) stating the type of food and medicines the animals receive. Said information will be periodically audited by interested parties. It is important to work with animals that ensure meat quality homogeneity and controlled lean percentage.
- Selection of primary producers and/or slaughterhouses: they must be approved by the SENASA. In addition, *prosciutto* manufacturers must audit their suppliers as regards Good Livestock Practices (GLP) and/or Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP).

Only hind legs of castrated pigs or non-breeding females, not hind legs of boars and of breeding sows.

All parameters defined below must be duly registered.

Note: Pig leg must be massaged in order to extract all traces of blood or synovial liquid.

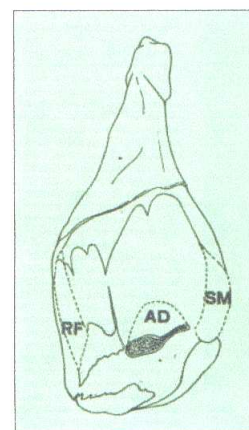
Reception temperature: below 5 °C.


If temperature is between 5 and 7°C and other meat characteristics (pH – weight – sensorial) are acceptable, the meat can be used for production, provided it is immediately refrigerated and a further inspection is carried out when it recovers an adequate temperature.

If reception temperature is higher than 7°C, the meat cannot be accepted at the plant for manufacturing *prosciutto*.

pH: between 5.8 and 6.1

This range defines exactly the pieces that may be used for production in order to obtain the “Seal”. There is no tolerance for



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this parameter as other meats are considered potentially defective.

The pH must be measured in the semi membranous muscle shown in the graph as SM.

Piece weight: between 10 and 12.5 kg.

Smaller pieces cannot be used for manufacturing prosciutto. Larger pieces (up to 15 kg) may be used, but evidence must be provided that they receive a differentiated treatment throughout the process (by identifying the pieces and respecting the process variances they cause). Therefore, batches must be divided by weight.


Sensorial parameters

PARAMETER	CHARACTERISTIC	OBSERVATION
Meat texture and other characteristics	Firm, adherence between muscles and to the bone. Without bruises and/or fissures	Evaluated at reception temperature
Fat texture	Firm, with solid aspect, non oily	Evaluated at reception temperature
Meat color	Homogeneous non pale pink	Defective meats (PSE or DFD) are not accepted PSE: Pale, soft and exudative. DFD: Dark, firm, and dry
Fat color	Typical white	Not yellow

Microbiological parameters

These analyses will indicate the hygienic-sanitary condition of the farm the raw material comes from and of the transportation mean used.

- *Escherichia coli*: absence in 0.1 gr. AOAC 17 th 991.14 Method.
- *Salmonella*: absence in 25 gr. ICMSF 1983 Method.

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- *Listeria monocytogenes*: absence in 25 gr. FSIS / USDA Method.

It must be noted that we do not consider this to be a direct reception control parameter as the respective results are obtained in a later period.

Important: In order to ensure a quick refrigeration of the pieces received to preserve their quality, the processing plant must count with an adequately sized refrigerator.

2) Refrigeration

Pieces hung in the refrigerator are to reach salting temperature, a maximum of 4°C.

3) Leg trimming

Pork legs are trimmed to ensure homogeneity of pieces before salting. Excess fat, skin and meat parts that are not desirable in the final product are cut off leaving the bone intact. Pieces are then transported to the salting chamber where this process is carried out.


NOTE 1: Pieces must be identified in this stage by means of a seal on the skin. This enables traceability throughout the process (including finished and packed products). This identification must be registered and this record must be indicated in later charts to ensure product tracing.

NOTE 2: Afterwards, selected legs are pressed manually or mechanically in order to drain all blood left or synovial liquid that must be expressed through “leg breaking”. It is recommended to carry out this procedure outside the salting chamber.

4) Salting

- Chamber temperature: maximum 7°C
- Humidity: minimum 90%

The system will determine the safe chamber temperature (maximum 7°C), so as to control the microbial development that may deteriorate products. However, temperature cannot be so low as to prevent the diffusion of salt into the piece center and/or the expression of water outward.

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Environmental humidity must be maintained above 90% throughout the salting process to avoid excessive drying of the interchange surface.

Leg rubbing with a mixture of salt and other authorized additives is carried out in the same chamber. Amounts of salt and additives are especially controlled complying with the limits specified in the Argentine Food Code. Then, piles are formed where legs are placed on a “salt bed” and are intercalated with the mixture mentioned above. The pieces remain there the time necessary to achieve the required salt concentration for preservation and attainment of optimal flavor.

The effect produced by the use of additives is known as *prosciutto* curing.

Batches that enter the salting chamber every day must be identified.

Removal of each batch from the chamber will be determined by measuring salt percentage in the center of the *prosciutto*. This percentage will be measured through the rump and the inside muscle reaching the bone. Said measurements must be registered.

It must be taken into account that if legs included in a batch are of different sizes (approved by this document), salting time will not be necessarily the same. This must be managed from the moment of raw material reception and pieces outside the desired average weight must be identified.

The procedure followed to ensure full salt penetration in the piece is very important in this stage as regards quality of final product.

5) Washing


Without excluding other washing methods, it is recommended to immerse *prosciuttos* in pools with constant drinking water circulation during a period of 18 to 24 hours, to remove superficial salt (brushes may be used) and excess salt that may have been absorbed into the meat.

Potability of water used must be conveniently registered.

6) Pre-drying/stoving

According to temperatures used, the phase will be called **stoving** (see glossary) from 26 to 28°C or **pre-drying** (see glossary) for lower temperatures, near 16°C.

In any case, relative ambient humidity must be maintained relatively high (around 75%) to avoid drying the surface of the product in excess.

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This process takes approximately one week in both cases. Product color development (“color breaks” – due to the combination of sodium nitrate with myoglobin) is achieved by working with stoving temperatures.

7) Drying, Aging or Maturing

Most important modifications of ham take place in this phase, and these modifications give the product the characteristics that distinguish it as *Prosciutto*. Dehydrating continues although not so intense and lipolysis and proteolysis reactions appear. These reactions generate essential degrading compounds that provide the organoleptic characteristics of the product.

A good temperature and humidity control in the drying chamber is required throughout this stage. Temperature and humidity values must be determined by each manufacturer according to the process used.

In addition, it is necessary to control the development of ambient fungi. For this purpose temperatures must be maintained between 13 and 16°C and relative ambient humidity between 65 and 70%. The use of chemical agents for controlling ambient fungi is prohibited.

This stage ends when a 35% reduction in product weight has been achieved and aging time is beyond 12 months counted from the date of entry into the drying chamber.


After desired weight reduction has been attained, “plastering” (see glossary) of the *prosciutto* is allowed in order to reach the required aging time without continuing to lose weight. Otherwise, the *prosciutto* must remain in the chamber until the above mentioned weight reduction is reached even exceeding the staying time.

Minimum maturing time for *prosciuttos* authorized to carry the Seal is 365 days.

Important: Parameters to be controlled in the last two phases (6 and 7) must be registered. Use of automated equipment is recommended for these two cases to ensure better control of variables and energy use.

8) Boning

Removal of bones and skin, as required, is carried out in this phase. This means that two types of *prosciutto* that qualify for carrying the seal are differentiated here: boned

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with and without skin. It is also possible that removal of bone may not be necessary, so only special preparation for packing is required in this case.

It is important to make clear that the difference between these two *prosciuttos* is the boning or the removal of the skin, as they were processed following the same procedure in all previous stages.

The boning phase is carried out after completing the manufacturing process because it is very important that drying and maturing take place with the bone, as this affects final aroma and flavor.

9) Pressing

Pressing may be carried out using refrigerated hydraulic presses. In case of using molds, pressing must take place in a refrigerating chamber at a top temperature of 4°C, uninterruptedly during 24 hours.

Any of the two systems produces a compact piece (not disassembling at slicing) with homogeneous form.

10) Packing


After individual tasting of pieces, they are vacuum packed whole or, if necessary, cut in halves. This type of packaging prevents piece weight loss after sale and ensures a product shelf life of 6 months.

Packaging of whole pieces is carried out using construction paper that is then covered with a cotton mesh. The thread from which pieces are hung must remain outside and labels are placed on the cotton mesh.

11) Dispatch

Temperature: maximum 5 °C

Products are to be stored in refrigerators (no freezing). Shipments must be prepared in wooden or cardboard boxes that may ensure the maintenance of the structure throughout transportation and storage. Companies must submit dispatch registers indicating transportation hygiene and temperature conditions.

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DIFFERENTIATING PRODUCT ATTRIBUTES

Ingredients

Based on Article Nr 286 from the AFC (Joint Resolution SPyRS and SAGPyA Nr 104 and Nr 414 from 06.10.05), ingredients authorized for this product are the following:

Obligatory:

- Pork hind legs
- Semi fine salt, washed and purified for human consumption.
- Preservative: Sodium nitrate – amount authorized 300 parts per million of finished product.
- In case sugar is used, the AFC establishes that it must be common cane sugar type A and/or higher qualities.


Optional ingredients:

- Antioxidants: like sodium eritorbate; sodium ascorbate; ascorbic acid or mixtures thereof.
- Other additives provided for in the AFC in authorized concentrations, except for preservatives and antioxidants mentioned before.
- Selected spices, irradiated.
- Meat cultures or starters.

In the case of using microorganisms, these must be lyophilized or super frozen, acting as nitrifiers or acidifiers (or mixtures) and must be incorporated with the rubbing salt, with the sole purpose of achieving color and flavor improvement and adequate selection of meat's native flora against potential presence of pathogens.

Physicochemical parameters

- Piece weight: 5 to 6.5 Kg.
- Salt: 6 to 7 %.

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- Humidity: below 42.5%.
- Proteins: above 22 %.

Sensorial and Functional Parameters


- Color at cutting: typical pink to purple red in the lean part and bright aspect of fat. Homogeneous.
- Surface fat: less than 1 cm.
- Texture: firm and dry (ambient temperature).
- Aroma and flavor: according to condiments and spices used. There must be no abnormal odors.

IMPORTANT: Products covered by this protocol and by SAGPyA Resolution Nr 392/05 must be separated from the rest, and batches and shipments must be correctly identified in order to ensure they are handled separately from products not protected by the Seal throughout the process (from raw material to packaged product). To this end, companies must count with documentation and registers safeguarding the goods carrying this mark.

DIFFERENTIATING ATTRIBUTES OF CONTAINERS

In order to enhance product and presentation, only primary packaging with vacuum sealed thermo shrinkable material or packaging in modified or controlled atmospheres shall be accepted. Packaging security and product maintenance throughout shelf life must be ensured.

Innovative materials shall be evaluated by the competent authority and they must be accepted by the market. The form and size of these new materials may vary.

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Glossary


Breaking (of pork leg): Mechanical action on pork leg to break the knee capsule containing synovial liquid.

Stoving: Stage in dry cold cut manufacturing process where products are exposed to the effects of temperatures of around 26°C with the purpose of creating adequate conditions for accelerating appearance of the typical red color.

Pre-drying: Stage in dry salted meat manufacturing process where products are exposed to the effects of temperatures of around 16°C for attaining homogenization of product salt concentration and water.

Plastering: Coating of the *prociutto* piece for detaining the drying process. The interchange surface of *prosciutto* is covered with a paste made of melted fat and starch. In addition to slowing down the drying process, plastering homogenizes product humidity and color.

ANNEX


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GUARANTEE LETTER MODEL FROM PIG FARMING COMPANY

Pig growers must guarantee compliance with the following aspects related with final quality of animals they sell:

- Contingency plan in case of infection problem in the farm.
- Vaccination programs for each pig development period established by the veterinarian in charge.
- Control of external and internal parasites. Register of worming dates and treatments against infestations.
- Medicines: must be supplied by the veterinarian in charge. Products used, doses, treatment length and withdrawal period must be registered.
- Good feeding practices: adequate nutrients must be supplied to cover nutrition needs required for maintaining the health and welfare of pigs.
Food must be free from fungi, toxins or other impurities that may damage animals.
Balanced diets must be supplied providing energy, proteins, essential fat acids, minerals and vitamins. In addition, there must be an adequate disposal of excrements and a pest control program.

All information must be adequately registered by the growing farm so as to allow auditing by interested parties.


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Elaboration of this protocol

This document has been prepared by the external consultant, Mr. Rubén Pavesi, technical specialist in the subject selected by the National Food Administration of the SAGPyA for developing this protocol.

In addition, the elaboration of this protocol counted with the cooperation of the following professionals and entities in this sector:

- National Institute of Industrial Technology (INTI) – MEAT.
- Chamber of the Argentine Industry of Cold Cuts and By-products (CAICHA).
- El Artesano S.A.
- Sello de Oro S.A.
- Fundación ArgenINTA.
- SENASA (Factory area).

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Audit date:

Auditing company:

Audited company:

Location:

Head Office:

Town or city:


Telephone:

Name of company's employee responsible for quality /position:

Product: *Prosciutto* (Dry-cured ham)

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RESULTS

Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
PROCESS			
1. Reception of raw material			
a. Verify registers indicating the use of leg pork meat from castrated pigs or non-breeding females.			
b. Reception temperature ¹ : below 5°C.			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis.
c. Piece weight ² : 10 to 12.5 Kg.			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis.

¹ Reception temperature between 5°C and 7°C is acceptable, but material must be refrigerated and another inspection must be carried out when adequate temperature is reached.


² Larger pieces (up to 15 kg) may be received but it must be demonstrated that they receive a differentiated treatment throughout the process.

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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
d. pH: 5.8 to 6.1			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis.
e. Microbiological analysis			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis.
1. Escherichia coli: absence in 0.1 gr. Method AOAC 17th 991.14.			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis.
2. Salmonella: absence in 25 gr. Method ICMSF 1983			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis.
3. Listeria monocytogenes: absence in 25 gr. Method FSIS / USDA			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis.
f. Sensorial parameters			
1. Texture and other meat characteristics: firm, adherence between muscles and to the bone, without bruises or fissures.			

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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
(Evaluated at reception temperature)			
2. Fat texture: firm, solid aspect, not oily. (Evaluated at reception temperature)			
3. Meat color: non pale pink and homogenous.			
4. Fat color: typical white.			
2. Refrigeration: Maximum temperature: 4°C.			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis.
3. Leg trimming: Verify identification of pieces to ensure product traceability.			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis.
4. Salting:			

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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
a. Chamber temperature: max. 7°C.			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis.
b. Ambient humidity: minimum 90%			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis.
c. Identification of batches introduced each day in the salting chamber.			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis
d. Verification of registers corresponding to removal of each batch from the salting chamber.			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis
e. Verify the use of authorized additives indicated in the protocol.			Verify register/s.
f. Removal of each batch from the chamber will be determined by measuring salt percentage in the center of the prosciutto.			

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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
5. Washing: must be carried out with drinking water.			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis.
6. Pre-drying/stoving:			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis.
Relative ambient humidity: approx. 75%			
Stoving: 26 to 28°C Pre-drying: lower temperatures, near 16°C.			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis
7. Drying, Aging or Maturing:			
a. Temperature: 13 to 16°C.			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis
b. Relative ambient humidity: 65 to 70%.			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis


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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
c. Minimum maturing time: 365 days after entrance into drying chamber.			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis
8. Pressing³: a. Temperature: maximum 4°C. b. Time: 24 hours with refrigeration.			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis
10. Packaging: Control compliance with protocol provisions.			
11. Dispatch:			
a. Temperature: maximum 5°C			Verify register/s and record date and results of each analysis.
b. Transportation: hygiene and temperature			Verify register/s and record date and result of each observation and/or measurement...


³ This parameter is verified only if pressing is carried out in molds.

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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
12. HACCP system			
a. Verify cleaning chronogram and compare with registers of SSOPs applied at the plant.			
b. Verify registers of corrective actions related with SSOPs applied at the plant.			
c. Personnel garment and adequate general conditions.			Verify register/s and record result.
d. Register of controls of parameters defined for each CCP (Critical Control Point).			Verify register/s and record result
e. Control of registers associated with calibration of standards and measuring instruments.			Verify register/s and record result

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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
<i>FINISHED PRODUCT</i>			
1. Ingredients Verify use of ingredients established in the protocol.			Verify register/s
2. Physicochemical parameters:			
a. Piece weight: 5 to 6.5 Kg.			Verify register/s and record date and result.
b. Salt: 6 to 7 %.			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis.
c. Humidity: less than 42.5%.			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis.
d. Proteins: above 22%.			Verify register/s and record date and result of each analysis.


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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
3. Sensorial and Functional Parameters⁴			
a. Color at cutting: pink or purple red in the lean part and bright aspect in fat. Homogenous at cutting.			
b. Surface fat: less than 1 cm			
c. Texture: firm and dry at ambient temperature.			
d. Aroma and flavor: according to condiments and spices used. Absence of abnormal odors.			
PACKAGING			

⁴ Verify that analyses are carried out by authorized personnel.


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Attributes	Compliance		Observations
	YES	NO	
- Thermo shrinkable material vacuum sealed, or packaged in a modified or controlled atmosphere.			
- Construction paper wrapping covered by a cotton mesh.			
- Verify packaging security.			

Note: All analyses must be carried out by laboratories officially authorized for the studies indicated, using recognized official methods and calibrated equipment and instruments with their corresponding certificates.

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Conclusions

Persons from the audited company interviewed:

.....

On behalf of the auditing company

In agreement, on behalf of the audited company

Signature, name and seal

Signature and name

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