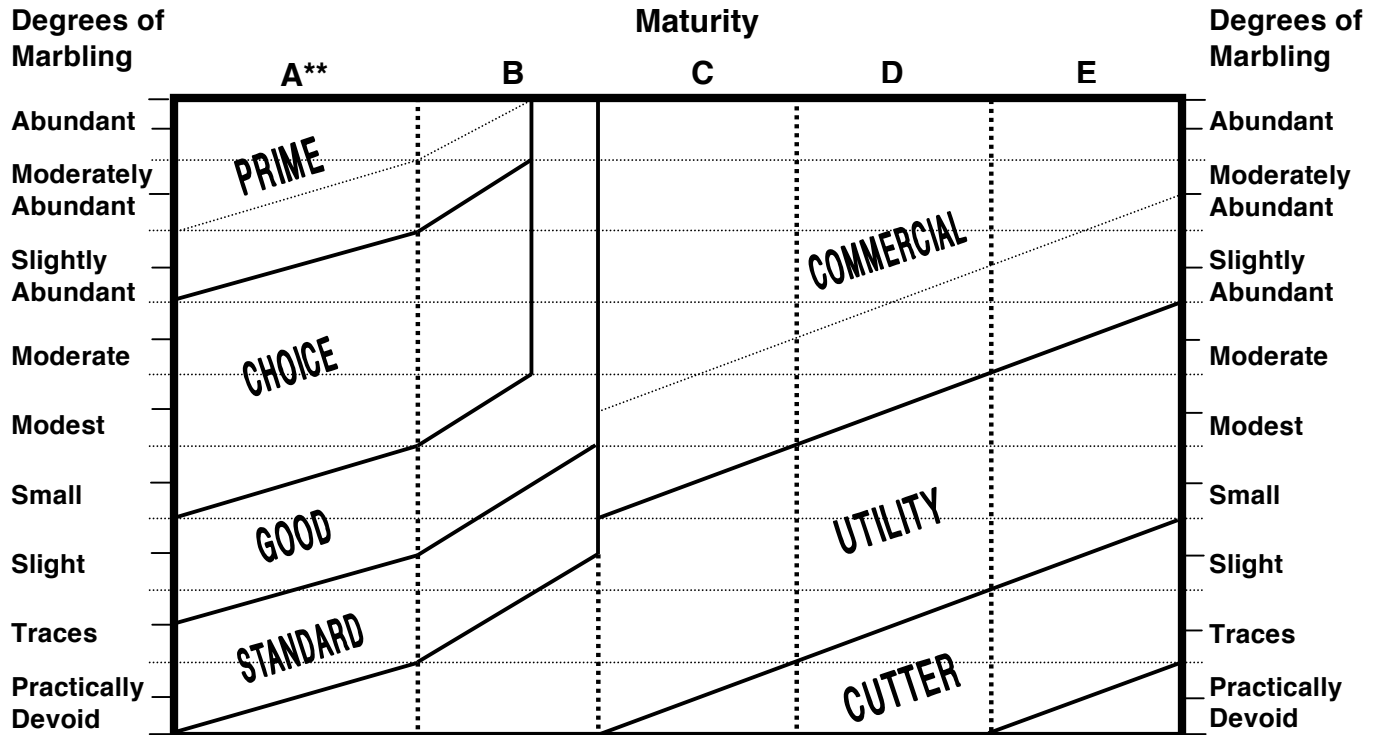


ANSC 627
Recent Changes in USDA beef grading
J.W. Savell

USDA, 1965 grade standards

Relationship Between Marbling, Maturity, and Carcass Quality Grade



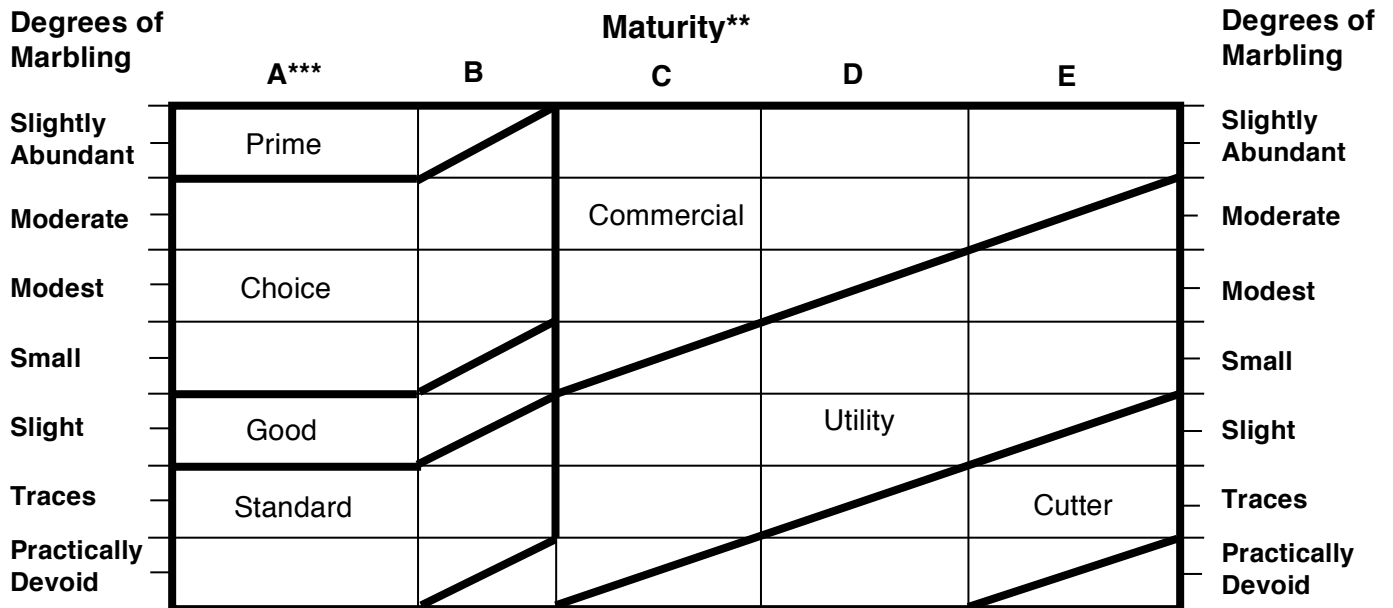
* Maturity increases from left to right (A through E).

** The A maturity portion of the Figure is the only portion applicable to bullock carcasses.

..... Represents midpoint of Prime and Commercial grades.

USDA, 1975 – Flattening the lines

Relationship Between Marbling, Maturity, and Carcass Quality Grade*



* Assumes that firmness of lean is comparably developed with the degree of marbling and that the carcass is not a “dark cutter.”
 ** Maturity increases from left to right (A through E).
 *** The A maturity portion of the Figure is the only portion applicable to bullock carcasses.

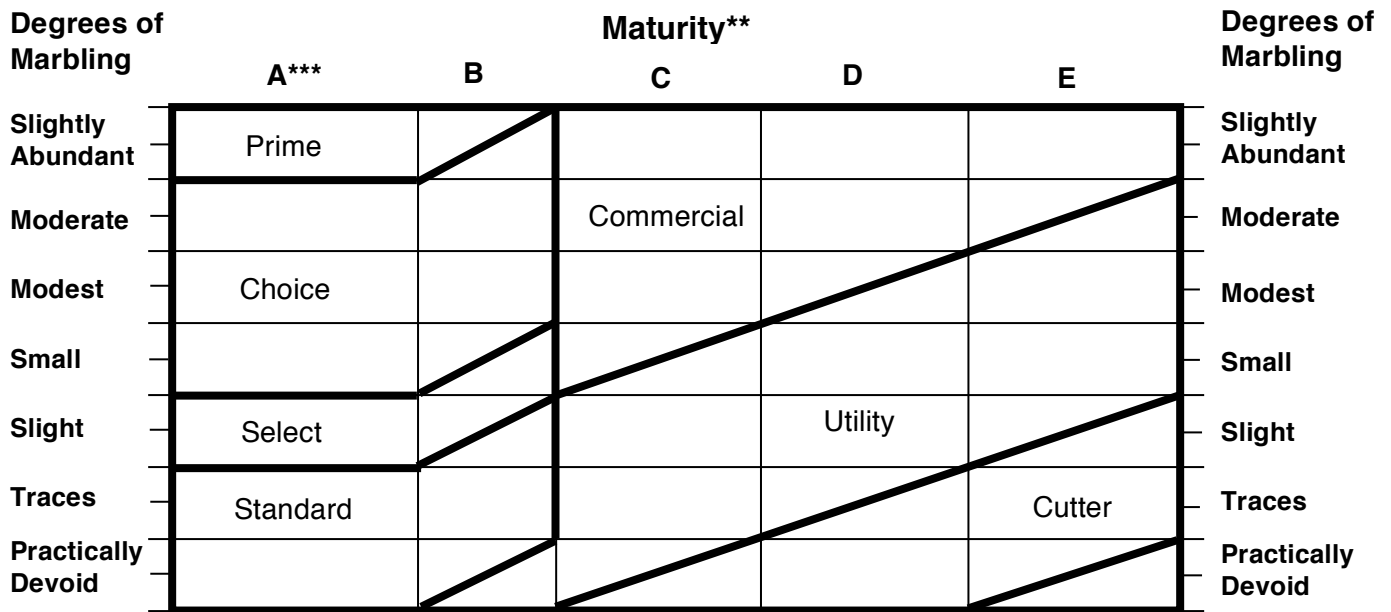
The chart above represents the changes in the USDA grade standards set forth by USDA in 1975. The major features of this grade change include:

- A leveling of the slope in A maturity for marbling requirements for the minimum of the Prime, Choice, and Standard grades. This was based on research that showed that there were no differences in palatability in beef between maturity groups from the minimum versus the maximum maturity of A maturity.
- An increase in minimum marbling requirements for the Good grade from Traces 50 to Slight 00.
- Reduced the maximum maturity permitted for steer, heifer, and cow beef in the Good and Standard grades to be the same as permitted in the Prime and Choice grades. This along with the increase in minimum marbling requirements for the Good grade was done to narrow the variation in expected eating quality and to help make it a more restrictive, leaner grade than Choice, which may help to make it more widely used than the previous Good.
- Conformation was eliminated as a quality grade factor, which was based on research that showed that variations in conformation were unrelated to differences in palatability. In addition, yield grades were a better indicator of the yield of retail cuts than conformation.

These grade standards were set to become effective on April 14, 1975, but because of a couple of court actions, they were not implemented until February 23, 1976. This is why in some publications there will be references to “USDA (1975)” and “USDA (1976)” for the same grade standards—one date based on initial scheduled release and the other date based on the actual date of implementation by the government after litigation was ended.

USDA, 1987 – Select grade change

Relationship Between Marbling, Maturity, and Carcass Quality Grade*



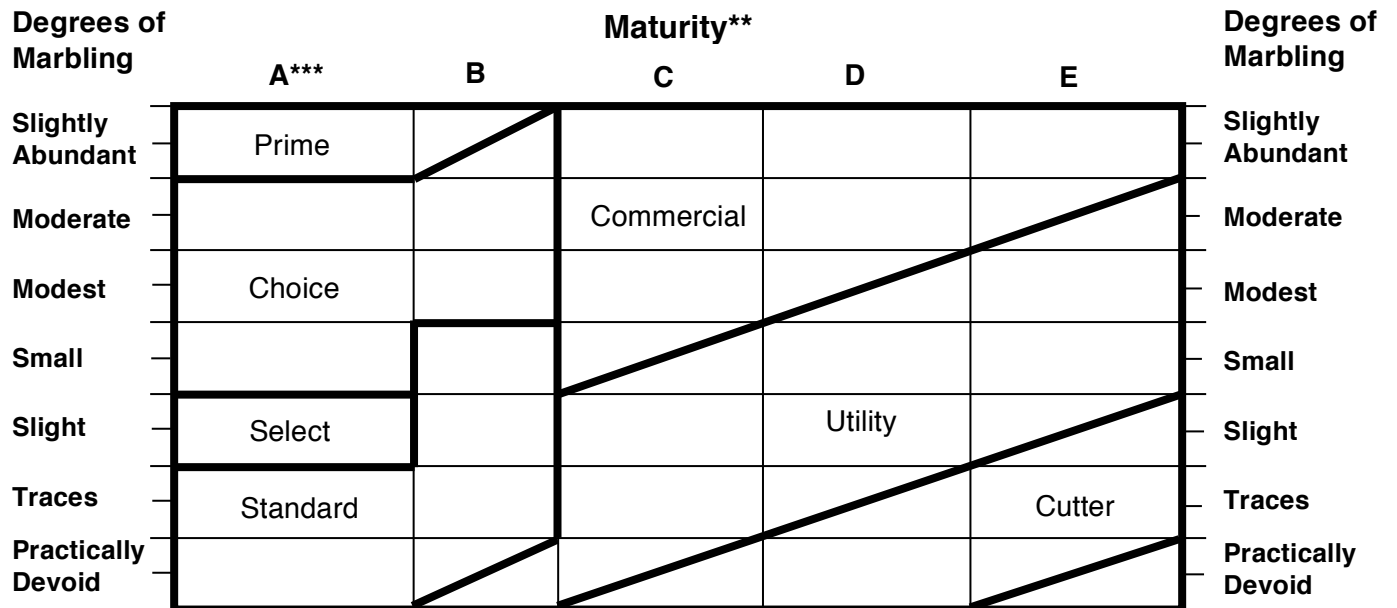
* Assumes that firmness of lean is comparably developed with the degree of marbling and that the carcass is not a “dark cutter.”

** Maturity increases from left to right (A through E).

*** The A maturity portion of the Figure is the only portion applicable to bullock carcasses.

USDA, 1997 – B maturity grade change

Relationship Between Marbling, Maturity, and Carcass Quality Grade*



* Assumes that firmness of lean is comparably developed with the degree of marbling and that the carcass is not a “dark cutter.”

** Maturity increases from left to right (A through E).

*** The A maturity portion of the Figure is the only portion applicable to bullock carcasses.