



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

Grain Inspection,  
Packers and Stockyards  
Administration

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May 5, 2011

Reference # 239

**TO:** FGIS POLICY BULLETIN BOARD

**FROM:** Robert Lijewski, Director /s/ *Robert Lijewski*  
Field Management Division

**SUBJECT:** Determining odor in grain, rice, and similar commodities

**ORIGINATING OFFICE:** Policies, Procedures, and Market Analysis Branch

### 1. PURPOSE

This Policy Bulletin standardizes the procedure for determining odor in grain, rice, and similar commodities. Also, it clarifies the definition of “consensus” when the consensus approach is used in assessing odor. This Program Bulletin becomes effective immediately, and supersedes all previous policies addressing the assessment of odors.

### 2. BACKGROUND

The Grain Inspection Handbook states a “consensus” of experienced inspectors is used, whenever possible, on samples containing marginal odors. The current definition of “consensus,” when it pertains to odor is a simple majority, whether it is in the field or at the Board of Appeals & Review.

When grain has a “distinct” odor, it should be graded musty, sour, or commercially objectionable foreign odor. The definition of “**distinct**,” when it pertains to odor is not the intensity of the off-odor, but the **presence of the off-odor**. The consensus approach is not required if no odor, or a distinct odor, is present.

### 3. POLICY

To improve inspection uniformity, Federal Grain Inspection Service is clarifying the definition of “consensus” when it relates to marginal odors. This clarification is in line with our standard policy of giving the grain the benefit of the doubt for all marginal inspection factors. This clarification does not change the interpretive line for odor. When the “consensus” approach” is used, a sample is considered to have a “distinct” odor when you have a **clear** majority to grade the sample U.S. Sample Grade.

The following are examples of a **clear** majority:

- a. Two inspectors – both inspectors must agree
- b. Three inspectors – two of the three inspectors must agree
- c. Four inspectors – three of the four inspectors must agree
- d. Five inspectors – four of the five inspectors must agree
- e. Six inspectors – four of the six inspectors must agree

If a sample does not meet a **clear** majority when the consensus approach is used, the sample will be made “okay” for the odor analysis. As the examples show, when a consensus approach is used, a sample must have at least 2/3 or more of the inspectors agree before an odor can be applied.

## **PROCEDURE**

Official inspection personnel shall determine the odor of grain, rice, edible beans, peas, lentils, and like commodities, **by smelling the surface** of the sample. To ensure inspection uniformity in the application of odor, all official inspection personnel shall observe the following practices:

1. The **inspector(s)** is/are responsible for making an impartial determination for all odors using their professional judgment.
2. Cold samples may need to be warmed before making an odor determination.
3. Stir or agitate the sample as necessary before making an odor determination.
4. Place the nose as close as possible to the surface of the sample **without the nose touching** the sample.
5. If the odor is distinct, apply the odor. If the odor is marginal utilize a consensus approach to make an odor determination.
6. Use a reference sample when necessary.

## **4. FILING INSTRUCTIONS**

File a copy of this memo with the Grain Inspection Handbook, Book II until the handbook is revised to include this change. Field office managers must ensure that a copy of this memorandum is provided to official agencies operating within their circuit.

## 5. QUESTIONS

Direct any questions regarding this policy to Patrick McCluskey, Policies, Procedures, and Market Analysis Branch, at (816) 823-4639 or email at [Patrick.J.McCluskey@usda.gov](mailto:Patrick.J.McCluskey@usda.gov).