

USDA Updates COOL Rules Interpretation

by **Janie Gabbett** on 09/29/2008

USDA on Friday, Sept. 26, updated its online Q&A on mandatory country-of-origin labeling (mCOOL) that goes into effect on Tuesday to say meat processors cannot label U.S.-origin meat with the broader mixed origin label on days that no mixed origin product is processed.

Under increasing pressure to ensure processors label U.S.-origin meat as such, USDA updated two questions and their answers in its online guidance document as follows:

Question: Can a packer or intermediary supplier that processes whole muscle meat products derived from both mixed origin animals (e.g., Product of U.S., Canada and Mexico) and U.S. origin animals commingle and label these products with a mixed origin label?

Answer: If meat covered commodities derived from U.S. and mixed origin animals are commingled during a production day, the resulting product may carry the mixed origin claim (e.g., Product of U.S., Canada, and Mexico). Thus, it is not permissible to label meat derived from livestock of U.S. origin with a mixed origin label if solely U.S. origin meat was produced during the production day.

Question: Can a retailer, like a meat packer, label meat products derived from livestock born, raised, and slaughtered in the United States (i.e., Product of USA) as having a mixed origin (e.g., Product of the United States, Canada, and Mexico)?

Answer: Similar to packers and intermediary suppliers, retailers are permitted to market U.S. produced meat products under a mixed origin label (e.g., Product of U.S., Canada and Mexico) if they are commingled with meat of mixed origin. That is, if a retailer further processes meat at the store and the resulting package includes meat of both U.S. origin and mixed origin (e.g., Product of U.S., Canada and Mexico), the origin declaration can read Product of U.S., Canada and Mexico.

To view the entire updated Q&A, [click here](#).

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