

Tagging regulations - get up to speed



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Changes to the way lambs can be tagged comes into force from 1 June 2012. When EID was first introduced in January 2010, one of the rules in the legislation included lambs retaining one ID for life. In short this means that no re-tagging of lambs born in 2012 is allowed, with the exception of animals upgraded to Electronic Status for breeding purposes, or for export or in the case of lost tags.

For the last two years, the Department allowed the re-tagging of lambs moving onto subsequent holdings from the holding of birth to continue while discussions with stakeholders were ongoing. However this allowance will no longer be allowed from 1 June 2012.

The rule means that sheep (apart from breeding animals and hoggets turning 12 months of age) must retain one identity for life from the holding on which they were born. It marks an end to the practice of re-tagging store or fattening lambs when moving onto/off subsequent holdings. The existing slaughter derogation continues. This allows lambs moving directly from the farm of origin to a slaughter facility to be tagged with a temporary tag.

All sheep require tagging before nine months of age if they have not previously moved off their holding of birth. All sheep born from 1 January 2010 also need to be upgraded to EID status by the time they reach 12 months of age. This includes breeding males and females and fattening animals that will subsequently be slaughtered. Options for upgrading animals to EID status will be covered in detail later in the article. A full breakdown of forthcoming tagging rule options is explained in pictures one to four.

Example 1: Dispatch/movement document for 100 animals tagged in sequence

Please enter tag numbers of sheep leaving the holding												
1	I	E	0	4	5	4	3	2	1	0	0	0
2	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
3												
4												
5												
6	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	"	0	0	1
7										0	0	0
8												
9												

Example 2: Dispatch/movement document for 6 animals from mixed holdings

Please enter tag numbers of sheep leaving the holding												
1	I	E	0	4	5	4	3	2	1	0	0	0
2	"	"	"	"	6	2	1	1	0	0	1	4
3					8	7	6	5	4	0	0	5
4					9	7	5	2	1	0	0	1
5					7	5	6	4	1	0	2	1
6					7	4	3	2	1	0	0	1
7					4	4	2	1	1	0	0	2
8												
9												

UPGRADING TO FULL ELECTRONIC STATUS EID TAGS

As stated before, all sheep must be upgraded to Electronic status on reaching 12 months of age. Animals possessing a mart tag or single electronic tag can be upgraded to electronic status at any stage before they reach 12 months of age, provided they are being retained for breeding or destined for live export. There are two main options to achieving this.

Flockowners can also choose to use ruminal boluses which can be electronically scanned. In this case animals require a blue tag to signify such.

Option 1: Where animals possess a single permanent tag (left ear) or a single electronic tag (right ear), corresponding tags with an identical tag number to that which the animal already possesses can be ordered and applied. This will bring the animal to full EID status.

Option 2: This is the more common option reported to date. In this case, flockowners can order a new set of

electronic tags (permanent and electronic tag). These can be applied to replace the existing tag the animal holds. The existing tag can be removed with tag number changes correlated in the flock register. Lambs tagged with a single mart tag and destined for slaughter must retain one ID for life and cannot be upgraded to EID status before 12 months of age.

COMPLYING WITH MOVEMENT DOCUMENTS

All flockowners received a new sheep dispatch/movement document book in 2011. Once received, flockowners were obliged to use these documents when moving animals off their holding. Mart managers and factory personnel report some flockowners still presenting sheep for sale/slaughter accompanied by old dispatch documents. It is important to note that sheep can no longer be traded using old dispatch/movement documents.

The correct dispatch/movement documents to use are readily identifiable as they also contain food chain information (FCI). This is located on the back of the white dispatch leaf and is not present in older or outdated documents.

According to Department legislation, the FCI declaration must be completed in respect of all sheep being presented for slaughter and should also be completed in respect of any sheep going through marts as the sheep



may be slaughtered in the short term.

FILLING OUT THE DISPATCH DOCUMENTS

All animals, with the exception of those retained for breeding purposes, are now obliged to maintain one identity for life as discussed earlier.

There are therefore some changes to the way dispatch documents need to be filled out.

Where animals are moving off the farm they were born or are tagged with your own sheep tags (same flock designator), the last five digits will suffice for recording when trading animals.

The check letter at the end of the tag number can also be included but this is not compulsory. Where you are recording a batch of sheep that are tagged with sequential tag numbers it is sufficient to write the last five digits of the first tag number and the last tag number in the sequence as shown in Example 1.

However where animals are purchased onto the farm and possess a tag with a dif-

ferent sheep designator (this is the number unique to your flock and is printed as such in the dispatch document), then the full tag number needs to be recorded when sheep are leaving the holding, Example 2.

This includes the country of origin, IE, followed by the 12 digit tag number. Again the check letter can also be included but this is not compulsory.

NOTIFYING FARM TO FARM MOVEMENTS

Farm to farm movements must be notified with your local Department office.

When sheep are sold and moved directly from one farm to another, the seller completes the dispatch documents as normal. This includes recording the destination of sheep and the flock number/herd number of the purchaser.

The seller retains the yellow copy and gives both the pink and white copy to the purchasing farmer. It is then the responsibility of the purchaser to send the pink copy of the dispatch form to their local Department office

within seven days of the date of movement.

REPLACING LOST TAGS

There are two options to replacing lost tags. Where an animal loses its tags but can be traced to the holding of origin, a replacement tag with an identical number can be ordered and applied.

Where traceability to the holding of origin cannot be established, the animals should be tagged with a red replacement tag or tags. The only option to move these animals off the holding is direct for slaughter.

ANIMAL WELFARE ISSUES

A Department manual will be sent to flockowners and includes advice on the correct tagging procedure and measures that can be taken if ear infections become a problem. Where this becomes a problem the Department has given an allowance to remove tags as long as the following measures are adhered to.

If flockowners follow this approach the Department has said that there should be no issues on cross compli-

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PICTURE ONE: SLAUGHTER/TEMPORARY TAG

The slaughter derogation continues for lambs under 12 months of age moving from their farm of origin direct to a slaughter facility. This allows lambs to be slaughtered with just a temporary tag. However, animals with a temporary tag cannot be sold in farm to farm movements or through a mart.

PICTURE TWO: PERMANENT TAG (MART TAG)

Permanent, or mart tags as they are otherwise known, are required as a minimum requirement for selling animals under 12 months old in marts or through farm to farm movements. Under forthcoming rules, farmers or feeders who purchase these lambs for further feeding will not be allowed to replace these tags with permanent tags from their own flock unless they are to be retained beyond 12 months of age or are being upgraded to EID status for export.

PICTURE THREE: FULL EID STATUS

Lambs can be sold through all avenues including live exports with full electronic identification status. This consists of a permanent tag in the animal's left ear and an electronic tag in the animal's right ear. The Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine are pushing this option to flockowners and especially those selling store lambs. The Department state these lambs will be more attractive than conventionally tagged lambs due to the facility of electronically scanning and recording tags.

PICTURE FOUR: SINGLE ELECTRONIC TAG

Lambs can also be traded with one electronic tag. In this option lambs require one electronic tag in their right ear. Again, the rationale behind this option is that lambs may be more attractive to store lamb buyers or larger feeders due to the potential of electronically reading and recording tag numbers.



TAGGING AT A GLANCE

- ➔ Direct to slaughter - no change; slaughter tag allowed.
- ➔ Selling through Mart - two choices; Mart or electronic tag.
- ➔ No retagging of lambs under 12 months of age (except for breeding or export).
- ➔ EID required for all animals once reach 12 months of age.
- ➔ Ewes born in 2009 or before continue to abide by old rules.

All sheep require tagging before nine months of age if they have not previously moved off their holding of birth.

ance for animals that had their tags removed on animal welfare grounds.

➔ Contact your veterinary surgeon to obtain advice on how to treat the infection.

➔ If deemed necessary to remove tags to allow an ear or ears to heal, remove the tag and record this in your flock register.

Removed tags need to be retained in case of an inspection and should be presented if required.

➔ Re-tag affected animals as soon as possible after the infection has healed.

➔ CORRECT TAGGING PROCEDURE

Advice is also included in the document on the best tagging practice that should be followed to minimise problems. Sheep should not be tagged if there is a parallel skin infection in the flock and if so you should wait until the infection has cleared. Recommendations include:

➔ Tagging should be carried out in hygienic conditions. It is important to have clean hands and use the appropriate equipment that is also in a good hygienic condition

to minimise infection rates.

Disinfecting equipment and the sheep's ear prior to tagging each animal will minimise the transfer of infection from sheep to sheep during tagging.

➔ Tagging should be carried out where possible at the correct time of year to avoid flystrike.

➔ It is best to tag on a fine day where possible. Animals' ears should be dry at the very least.

➔ The site of tagging is very important for retention, low infection rates and to minimise trauma.

The recommendation is to tag approximately one third of the length of the ear from the head. This is generally the strongest and thickest part of the ear. Feel where veins are located and insert the tag midway in height of the ear and in the middle of the two main veins.

➔ The female or button part of the tag must always be placed on the inner side of the ear.

➔ After tagging, both sections of the tag should be twisted 360 degrees to loosen the tag and increase airflow.

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