

EID (Electronic Tagging)

There is still some confusion among farmers regarding the requirements for tagging sheep this year. The issues have been addressed at the recent Teagasc sheep seminars throughout the country. For the majority of farmers the issues are straightforward. Only tags that have been approved for use under the NSIS may be used.

(An Electronic Identification set, (EID set) refers to a pair of tags, one being a conventional mart tag for the left ear and one being an EID tag for the right ear.)

What is required?

The identification requirements for sheep, as outlined here apply to sheep born after 1 January 2010. The requirements for sheep born prior to 1 Jan 2010 continue to be the NSIS rules that were in force at that time. In general the identification requirements for sheep born after 1 January 2010 are as follows:

1. All sheep must be tagged with at least one tag by 9 months of age or on leaving the holding of birth, whichever comes first.
2. All sheep, born in 2010 or later, must be double tagged with an EID set by the time they reach 12 months of age.
3. **Sheep intended for slaughter, and going directly to a slaughter premises:** If these are to be sold before 12 months of age, they may be tagged in just the left ear with a conventional slaughter tag also referred to as a **temporary tag**. There is no need for electronic tagging.
4. **Sheep going for sale via a mart or directly to another farm:** If these are sold before 12 months of age they may be tagged in the left ear with a conventional tag which must be approved as a **mart tag**.
5. **Animals being kept for breeding:** These must be double tagged by 9 months of age with a conventional mart tag in the left ear and an electronic tag in the right ear. Both tags will have an identical 12 digit tag number. Both tags will be yellow. (An alternative option to the electronic tag is to fit animals with a bolus in the rumen. The tag fitted on the left ear of a sheep with a ruminal bolus will be light blue in color.)
6. **Animals bought in, to be kept on the farm for breeding.** Animals less than 12 months old bought at marts or directly from another farm, and tagged with one conventional mart tag must be upgraded to double tagging with an EID tag if they are to be retained for breeding. This must be done by the time the animal is 12 months of age. There are two options for upgrading (see note below re: upgrading).

7. **Animals bought in, having one conventional mart tag from the holding of origin to be kept on the farm for feeding & destined for slaughter before they are 12 months old.** From now until 1st April, 2011, animals in this category must be re-tagged, with one of your own tags in the right ear, before leaving your holding, as applied for the past few years. After 1st April 2011 animals in this category should not be re-tagged. They must retain the tag of origin. They then must be listed on your dispatch document as they leave your farm.
8. **Animals bought in already tagged with an EID set.** No further tagging of these animals required.
9. **Live Export:** Sheep born after 1 January 2010 and exported live to another country, including to Northern Ireland for slaughter, must be double tagged with a conventional tag in the left ear, and either an electronic tag in the right ear or a ruminal bolus. Sheep purchased for export but not identified as above can be upgraded to EID status (see below).

Upgrading to EID status

There are two choices.

1. A custom made EID tag, bearing the same number as the conventional mart tag already on the animal can be ordered. This will then be put on the right ear of the animal.
2. The more convenient system is that the sheep can be re-tagged with a new EID set from your own stock of tag sets, and the new tag number correlated to the old number in the flock register. The remaining tag can be left in or removed. If the remaining tag is electronic it must be removed

Optional electronic tagging

While all sheep must be tagged with at least one tag by 9 months of age, the tag does not have to be electronic on lambs being sold before they are 12 months old. However, the farmer may opt to use electronic tags. If this is his/her choice, there are two options. He/she may double tag them with a standard EID set. Alternatively, for lambs being sold intended for fattening, as in the store lamb trade, they may be tagged using a single electronic tag in the right ear.

Lost tags

Where a single tag has been lost, a custom made tag can be ordered to replace the lost tag and bearing the same number as the one remaining tag on the animal. Alternatively, the sheep can be re-tagged with a standard new EID set. (If you opt to re-tag with a new set and the remaining tag is the electronic tag, it must be removed) This is acceptable if the animal was born on your own farm. It is also acceptable for bought in animals, if the old number is known. The new tag number can then be correlated to the old number in the flock register.

If the old number is not known and you do not know the farm of origin of the animal, a special set of tags, red in color, must be ordered from your tag supplier. Animals bearing these red tags may remain on your farm as long as you wish. (According to current rules, when they are finally sold they may only be sold through a slaughter abattoir. However, this rule is likely to be changed allowing you sell these sheep wherever suits you.)