

National Scrapie Eradication Program: Animal Identification and Recordkeeping Guide for Sheep and Goats

Scrapie is a fatal, degenerative disease affecting the central nervous system of sheep and goats. There is no cure or treatment for scrapie.

The National Scrapie Eradication Program, coordinated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), has reduced the prevalence of scrapie by over 85 percent. To find and eliminate the last few cases in the United States, the cooperation of sheep and goat producers throughout the country is needed.

Producers are required to follow Federal and State regulations for officially identifying their sheep and goats. Producers must also keep herd records showing what new animals were added and what animals left the herd/flock. This guide is intended to help producers follow the regulations.

APHIS provides official plastic or metal eartags free of charge to producers. Producers may request free tags by calling 866-USDA-TAG (873-2824). In addition, producers may purchase tags directly from approved manufacturers to fit their needs. See the "Approved Tag Manufacturers" section below for more information.

Animals Requiring Identification

The following animals* are required by Federal and/or State regulations to be identified as part of the National Scrapie Eradication Program when they move in interstate commerce or ownership changes:

Sheep

- All sheep, EXCEPT
 - Sheep under 18 months of age in slaughter channels
 - Castrated sheep under 18 months of age

Goats

- All goats, EXCEPT
 - Low-risk commercial goats** exempted by the State in which they reside
 - Goats in slaughter channels
 - Castrated goats

*For more details on exemptions to the Federal sheep and goat identification requirements, review the regulation at www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie.

**The definition of a low-risk commercial goat is: a goat that is raised for fiber and/or meat; is not registered or exhibited; has not been exposed to sheep; is not scrapie-positive, scrapie-exposed, or high-risk for scrapie; is not from a scrapie-infected or source herd; and does not reside in California, Colorado, Illinois, Maryland, or Michigan.

In addition, intrastate sheep and goat identification requirements vary from State to State. Some States require additional animals to be officially identified, while other States exempt certain animals while in intrastate commerce. For the most current information on each State's identification and movement requirements, visit www.eradicatescrapie.org.

Official Identification

Official identification devices, including eartags and injectable transponders, must be approved by APHIS as being sufficiently tamper-resistant for the intended use, have good retention, and provide a unique identification number for each animal.

An owner may substitute tattooing for an official identification device under certain criteria, which are explained in the "Tattooing" section on the next page.

Obtaining Official Tags

To request free tags or ask questions, call 1-866-USDA-TAG (873-2824). For registered herds, please provide the herd's registration prefix and ask that it be used as your scrapie flock/herd identification number, along with your postal abbreviation. Tags may also be purchased directly from approved tag manufacturers. See next page for additional information.

All official National Scrapie Eradication Program identification tags have the U.S. shield printed on them.

Tips for Tagging

- Sheep and goats only need to be officially identified when leaving the premises or when being sold to another owner.
- Do not buy animals of any age that may be used for breeding or animals over 18 months of age for any purpose unless they have official identification applied.
- If you are selling or buying breeding animals, they need to be officially identified prior to or at the time of sale.
- The preferred placement for eartags is in the left ear to aid in shearing.

Official tags may not be sold or given to another person. If you no longer need the tags, they should be destroyed or returned to the APHIS Veterinary Services District Field Office for your State.

Approved Tag Manufacturers

APHIS has approved several companies to manufacture and sell official devices, including tags and injectable transponders. Producers should consider the different devices available—including radio frequency identification (RFID) tags, RFID implants, metal tags, or plastic tags—and choose what works best for them. For the list of approved tag manufacturers, visit www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie (click on “Sheep and Goat Identification”).

Tattooing

Registered animals may be identified with a registration tattoo instead of a tag, as long as the animal is accompanied by a copy of the registration certificate listing the current owner.

In addition, the flock identification number assigned by APHIS may be tattooed (along with an individual animal number) to officially identify sheep or goats that are not registered. If you have a registered herd prefix, you may request that APHIS assign it as part of your flock identification number.

Owners must ensure the legibility of tattoos. Owners should also be prepared to assist with the tattoo reading process, including providing light to assist with reading.

Recordkeeping

Records must be kept for 5 years after the animal is sold or otherwise disposed. Ideally, producers should keep records in an electronic format, such as a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. You must record the following information:

- official identification number
- breed
- sex
- date official identification was applied
- date animal was acquired or year of birth if natural addition
- name/address of previous owner (if applicable)
- date sold
- name/address of buyer

The official identification number is the complete number on the official USDA sheep/goat tag, official tattoo, or approved RFID device. If selling a group of animals that are tagged with sequential numbers, it is acceptable to list the first and last number in the series, rather than each individual number.

More Information

For more information about scrapie or the National Scrapie Eradication Program, please visit the following Web sites:

- **USDA APHIS**
www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie
- **National Institute for Animal Agriculture**
www.eradicatescrapie.org
- **American Sheep Industry Association**
www.sheepusa.org
- **American Goat Federation Web site**
www.americangoatfederation.org

If you have questions, contact the APHIS Veterinary Services District Field Office for your State (www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/downloads/vs_poc.pdf) or your State animal health office (www.usaha.org/portals/6/stateanimalhealthofficials.pdf).

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