

Interim Recognition of Shortened (Truncated) Format of Animal Identification Number

March 21, 2013

Summary: The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Administrator has recognized as official a variation of the Animal Identification Number (AIN). AINs with a “USA” prefix followed by 12 digits have been recognized as official numbers since 2004. The variation will have the USA prefix followed by 8 or 9 digits instead of 12. This number has been referred to as the American Identification Number. Tamper-evident eartags imprinted with “USA” followed by the 8- or 9-digit number applied to animals before March 11, 2015 are now recognized as official for the life of the animal. This transition aligns with the recently published traceability rule’s timeline for phasing out USA and manufacturer-coded AIN tags.

Background: APHIS has recognized AINs for use in officially identifying animals since 2004. The format of the AIN is 15 characters; the primary prefix is 840, which is the numeric code for the United States.

Manufacturers of ISO-compliant radio frequency transponders are assigned manufacturer codes by the International Committee on Animal Recording. The number encoded in ISO-compliant transponders is 15 digits prefixed with either the country code or the manufacturer’s code. Additionally, the livestock industry initiated the use of a 15-character number starting with “USA” in 1998, referred to in industry programs as the American Identification Number. While APHIS did not refer to the USA version of the AIN in the *Code of Federal Regulations* (CFR) as the American ID number, the industry has continued to use that name.

When APHIS recognized the 840 AIN number as official, the USA prefix and manufacturer codes were also recognized as official and included as additional formats under the AIN definition. APHIS intended to recognize these numbers for a short time to avoid retagging animals to meet official identification requirements. However, the transition to 840 as the sole AIN format did not occur until the recent publication of the final rule, “Traceability for Livestock Moving Interstate.” The final rule recognizes the USA and manufacturer-coded eartags as official for tags applied to animals before March 11, 2015.

The USA version (American ID) of the AIN has been used primarily in the dairy industry and some beef breed registries. The range of USA numbers start with “USA 000 050 000 000.” At the direction of the Council of Dairy Cattle Breeding, the National Association of Animal Breeders (NAAB) has coordinated the allocation of USA numbers. NAAB has kept a complete and accurate listing of all allocated numbers (see attachment to this report). USA-numbered eartags have been used particularly by the national, State, and county Dairy Herd Information Associations (DHIA); the Holstein Association; and the American Jersey Association. The organizations that receive allocation of the USA numbers administer the distribution of eartags to producers and maintain information on the producers who obtain the tags.



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Several organizations, when ordering tags through eartag manufacturers, omitted the zeros immediately after the USA characters. The adjacent pictures illustrate “truncated” eartags in which the zeros following “USA” were not imprinted on the tag. APHIS regulations require the complete official animal number to be imprinted on the eartag. The eartags without the complete AIN therefore do not meet the official eartag requirements.



The recently published traceability final rule establishes a 2-year transition period for recognizing only the 840 version of the AIN as an official identification number. Any AIN tag applied after March 11, 2015, must bear an 840 number. However, AIN tags with the USA prefix applied to animals before March 11, 2015, are official for the life of the animal. APHIS created this exception and the transition period to minimize the economic impact of the number restriction on producers and industry organizations. The transition period lets organizations using USA tags change their information systems and use up existing tag inventories while avoiding retagging animals that have USA tags.

To support a smoother transition to the 840 AIN and avoid retagging animals, the APHIS Administrator has recognized the truncated version of the USA number as official for tags applied through March 11, 2015. These tags must have “USA” followed by the 8- or 9-digit number imprinted on the tag. This transition aligns with the timeline set for phasing out both USA and manufacturer-coded AIN tags.