Official Eartags – Criteria and Options

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This report summarizes the criteria and options for official identification eartags based on the intended content of the proposed traceability rule and other policy revisions being made to VS memorandums.

Minimum criteria for official identification eartags for individual animals:

- Imprinted with a nationally unique official animal identification number
- U.S. shield[1]

Basic characteristics:

- Tamper evident, high retention
- Other characteristics defined through tag specification

Table 1. Official Identification Numbers for Individual Animals

Number	Format of Animal Number	Number Examples
National Uniform Eartagging System (NUES)	9 character - 2 numeric State code or 2 alpha postal abbreviation - 3 alpha series - 4 digits in a chronological numerical series	23 ELV 4574 PA ELV 4574
	8 character - Swine and other species (except sheep and goats) o 2 numeric State code o 2 alphabetical series o 4 digits in a chronological numerical series	23 AB 4574
Note: The adjacent number option provides an alpha/numeric format following the State abbreviation to avoid duplication of numbers	- Sheep and goats (exclusive to scrapie program) o 2 alpha postal abbreviation o 2 alphabetical or alphanumeric series o 4 digits in a chronological numerical series	PA AB 4574 or PA A2 4574
Animal identification number (AIN)	- 15 digits; 840 is the first three digits (numeric code for USA)	840 003 123 456 789
Flock-based number	- Flock identification number (maximum of 9 characters prefixed with State's postal abbreviation) with a unique herd management number	MN0456 4275
Location-based number[2]	- Either a premises identification number (PIN) or location identification number (LID) with a unique herd management number	006ER2A 4275

[1] In the past, States that ordered NUES tags directly from the manufacturer have used the State postal abbreviation in lieu of the U.S. shield and the letters "VS" for Veterinary Services. The following text is being considered for the new traceability regulation; "Beginning 1 year after the effective date of the final rule, all official eartags applied to animals must bear the U.S. shield." The intent is to achieve an easy and consistent means to determine if an animal's eartag is official per the *Code of Federal Regulations*.

[2] Location identifiers in the new traceability framework include both the premises identification number (PIN) issued through the PIN allocator and the Location Identification (LID) numbers issued by the State or Tribe.

Table 2. Summary of USDA Official Eartags (does not include official reactor tags, etc.)

Official Identification Eartags	General Explanation
Brucellosis vaccination eartag	- Restricted for use with brucellosis vaccination.
National Uniform Eartagging System (NUES) - Referred to as "Brite" Tags	- Historically been used for disease testing and interstate movement. - VS Memorandum being revised to allow distribution to producers at direction of State animal health officials.
Animal identification number (AIN) "840" Tags	- Provided to producers or animal health official. Various sizes, shapes, colors. Visual only or with RFID technology. May be imprinted with additional information for program identity, e.g., age, source programs.
Scrapie program tags	- Serial and flock identification tags including scrapie flock certification program tags approved through the scrapie program and provided at no cost to producers, markets, veterinarians, etc., through State or AVIC offices. "840" tags are also provided for regulatory work in infected and exposed flocks. Producers may purchase customized flock identification or "840" tags from approved tag manufacturers.
Premises identification number (PIN) tags – Slaughter swine	- Imprinted with premises identification number. Various tags approved through authorized manufacturers.

Table 3. Brucellosis Vaccination Eartag

Tag Information	Description
Program use	Brucellosis
Material type	Metal
Color	Orange
Species used on	Cattle and bison
Information on the tag	Front of tag - 2 State code - "V" followed by 2 alpha characters in series - 4 numbers in a chronological numerical series *Example:* 23VFE0578
	Back of tag - "VAC" to reflect the brucellosis vaccination - U.S. shield
Additional printing specifications	"T" is used following the State code to avoid duplication of numbers when the "V" series has been completely used.
Issued/distributed to	State/Federal employees & accredited veterinarians performing official brucellosis vaccination
Distribution records/reporting	Record of tags issued • The date, receipt, and the first and last serial number of the tags issued should be recorded. Record of tags applied • Permanent record of tags applied.
Other comments	Tag is applied in the middle of right ear.
How to obtain	State and Federal animal health officials, accredited veterinarians. For use only when calves are being vaccinated.

Table 4. National Uniform Eartagging System – ("Brite Tag")

9-character Format

Tag Information	Description
Program use	Not a specific disease program tag
Material type	Metal
Color	Silver *Note: USDA does not inventory a variety of colors; however, States may purchase colored tags, other than orange, from manufacturer.*
Species used on	Cattle most common. Acceptable for other species except sheep/goats.
Information on the tag	Front of tag - 2 numeric representing State code, or 2 alpha characters for State postal abbreviation - 3 alpha characters in an alphabetical series (omit "V" and "T" as first alpha in the series) - 4 digits in a chronological series Example: 60 ABC 0502
	Back of tag - U.S. shield - "VS" for Veterinary Services *Note: State abbreviations acceptable in lieu of the "VS" for tags purchased direct by the State from the tag company.*
Additional printing specifications	
Issued/distributed to	Federal & State animal health officials, accredited veterinarians. Distribution to producers is optional and determined by the State.
Distribution records/reporting	Tag distribution records maintained by the State. States may use the Animal Identification Management System for maintaining the distribution records.
Other comments	
How to obtain	State and Federal animal health officials, accredited veterinarians

Table 5. National Uniform Eartagging System – (“Brite Tag”)
8-character Format

Tag Information	Description
Program use	Not a specific disease program tag
Material type	Metal
Color	Silver
Species used on	Most commonly used on species with smaller ears (deer/elk, swine, etc., except sheep and goats)
Information on the tag	Front of tag - 2 numeric characters representing State code, or 2 alpha characters for State postal abbreviation - 2 alpha characters in an alphabetical series - 4 digits in a chronological series Example: 23BG0575
	Back of tag - U.S. shield - “VS” for Veterinary Services *Note: State abbreviations acceptable in lieu of the “VS” for tags purchased directly by the State from the tag company.*
Additional printing specifications	
Issued/distributed to	Federal & State animal health officials, accredited veterinarians. Distribution to producers is optional and determined by the State.
Distribution records/reporting	Tag distribution records maintained by the State. States may use the Animal Identification Management System for maintaining the distribution records.
Other comments	
How to obtain	State and Federal animal health officials, accredited veterinarians

Table 6. Animal Identification Number (AIN) Tags

Tag Information	Description
Program use	Applicable for all official identification requirements
Material type	Plastic: With or without RFID
Color	Various colors (for AIN RF tags, orange is reserved for calfhood vaccination)
Species used on	Various sizes, shapes approved for most species
Information on the tag For describing 2-piece tags, the designation of "Tag Piece A," is the piece attached to the inside of the animal's ear (visual from the front of the animal). "Tag Piece B" is the piece attached to the outside of the animal's ear (visual from behind the animal).	Tag Piece A: Inside of ear; visible from the front of the animal - U.S. shield - 15-digit code with 840 as first 3 digits (numeric code for USA) - Manufacturer's logo or trademark (printed or impression of)
	Tag Piece B: Outside the ear; visible from behind the animal - U.S. shield - UNLAWFUL TO REMOVE - Imprinting the AIN on the back piece of the tag is optional *Note: Print specification for swine tags is different due to the visibility of information imprinted on swine tags.*
Additional printing specifications	All tags have minimum print size specifications for required information imprinted on the tags. Other information, most applicable to the panel tags, may be imprinted on the tag if it does not reduce the readability of the required information. Tags with RFID must have all 15 digits of the AIN printed on the tag pieces that contain the transponder.
Issued/distributed to	USDA approves all AIN devices and allocates AIN only to authorized manufacturers that use the numbers on their approved devices. AIN manufacturers distribute tags through AIN managers with whom they have an agreement and directly to State/Federal animal health officials. AIN manufacturers may be AIN managers.
Distribution records/reporting	The entity (animal health officials or AIN manufacturer or managers) that provides the tag to the producer is responsible for having the distribution records entered/submitted to the Animal Identification Management System (AIMS). Likewise, if the tag is distributed to an AIN distributor, the distribution record is to be submitted to the AIMS. When issued for sheep and goats, the tag record must be administered through the scrapie program tag application of AIMS. A premises identification number (PIN) of the premises is required and is used for reporting the distribution record. The system will be adjusted to enable State-issued location identifiers to be used in lieu of PINs.
Other comments	Tag pairs are available (combination of visual tags or visual and RF).
How to obtain	AIN managers representing authorized AIN tag manufacturers (contact AIN manufacturers for information on their AIN managers). APHIS has limited inventory of AIN tags available to State and Tribal animal health officials and AVICs for disease program activities.

Figure 1. AIN Tags

AIN Panel Tag *(Visual Only)*	AIN RF Button Tags	AIN RF Panel Tags
Example of "Logo" AIN Tag	**Paired AIN Visual/RFID Tag Set**	**Paired AIN Visual/Visual Tag Set**
		No picture available at this time

Table 7. Flock Identification Tags

Tag Information	Description
Program use	Scrapie eradication program
Material type	Plastic or metal
Color	USDA-provided tags are white or blue (slaughter only). Producers can purchase tags in various colors.
Species used on	Sheep and goats
Information on the tag For describing 2-piece tags, the designation of "Tag Piece A," is the female piece typically attached to the inside of the animal's ear (visual from the front of the animal). "Tag Piece B" is the male piece typically attached to the outside of the animal's ear (visual from behind the animal).	Plastic –Tag Piece A: Inside of ear; visible from the front of the animal - U.S. shield - Flock identification number (maximum of 9 characters with first two the State abbreviation) - Unique herd management number - Manufacturer's logo or trademark (printed or impression of) Plastic – Tag Piece B: Outside the ear; visible from behind the animal - U.S. shield - UNLAWFUL TO REMOVE - May include the flock identification number (maximum of 9 characters with first two the State abbreviation) and/or unique herd management number
	Metal single piece – Front of tag - Flock identification number (maximum of 8 characters with first two the State abbreviation) Metal single piece – Back of tag - U.S. shield - Unique herd management number up to 6 digits in a chronological series Example: PA0575 4567
Additional printing specifications	May include customized printing in addition to the required printing on producer purchased tags. May include "SFCP" (Scrapie Flock Certification Program) when issued to participating producers.
Issued/distributed to	Producers who own flocks
Distribution records/reporting	Distributed through AIMS directly from approved tag manufacturer to producer
Other comments	Mandatory USDA identification program for sheep and goats. Producers in the voluntary SFCP program may have tags imprinted with SFCP. All sheep over 18 months of age; sexually intact sheep under 18 months of age that are sold for breeding or exhibition; sheep sold unrestricted, sheep not in slaughter channels; and sheep that have lambed or are pregnant. Breeding goats of any age that are registered or sold for commercial milk production and sexually intact goats of any age sold for exhibition.
How to obtain	Producers order tags through AVIC or State office or purchase directly from approved tag manufacturers.

Flock Identification Tags

XX represents State postal code.

Table 8. Scrapie Program Serial Tags

Tag Information	Description
Program use	Scrapie program
Material type	Plastic or metal
Color	White for sheep and goats eligible to move as breeding animals and blue for "slaughter only" animals
Species used on	Sheep and goats
Information on the tag For describing 2-piece tags, the designation of "Tag Piece A," is the female piece typically attached to the inside of the animal's ear (visual from the front of the animal). "Tag Piece B" is the male piece typically attached to the outside of the animal's ear (visual from behind the animal).	Tag Piece A: Inside of ear; visible from the front of the animal - U.S. shield - 8 characters - State postal abbreviation followed by a letter and number or a number and a letter, then 4 numbers (Examples: PAA12345 or PA1A2345) - Manufacturer's logo or trademark (printed or impression of)
	Tag Piece B: Outside the ear; visible from behind the animal - U.S. shield - UNLAWFUL TO REMOVE
	Metal single piece – Front of tag - 8 characters - State postal abbreviation followed by two letters and 4 numbers (Example: PABG0575) Metal single piece – Back of tag - State postal abbreviation and U.S. shield Metal – inside tag, tag company name
Additional printing specifications	Blue tags are printed with "SLAUGHTER ONLY," "MEAT ONLY," or "MEAT" on the back or male part.
Issued/distributed to	Markets, dealers, veterinarians, feedlot operators and others who do not own flocks
Distribution records/reporting	Distributed through AIMS
Other comments	Mandatory USDA identification program for sheep and goats. All sheep over 18 months of age; sexually intact sheep under 18 months of age that are sold for breeding or exhibition; sheep sold unrestricted, sheep not in slaughter channels; and sheep that have lambed or are pregnant. Breeding goats of any age that are registered or sold for commercial milk production and sexually intact goats of any age sold for exhibition.
How to obtain	Producers order tags through AVIC or State office.

Table 9. Premises Identification Number (PIN) Tag for Slaughter Swine

Tag Information	Description
Program use	Swine
Material type	Plastic
Color	Industry has recommended and is using pink.
Species used on	Slaughter swine
Information on the tag For describing 2-piece tags, the designation of "Tag Piece A," is the piece attached to the inside of the animal's ear. "Tag Piece B" is the piece attached to the outside of the animal's ear.	Tag Piece A: - U.S. shield - UNLAWFUL TO REMOVE
	Tag Piece B: - State postal abbreviation [1] - PIN - U.S. shield - UNLAWFUL TO REMOVE - Manufacturer's logo or trademark (printed or impression of) - Barcode of corresponding PIN on the reverse side.
Additional printing specifications	All tags have minimum print size specifications for required information imprinted on the tags. Other information may be imprinted on the tag if it does not reduce the readability of the required information. The herd management number is optional.
Issued/distributed to	Swine producers
Distribution records/reporting	Manufacturers report distribution of tags by product code to APHIS VS.
Other comments	
How to obtain	Producers may obtain direct from authorized manufacturers.

Tag Piece B [2]
(Back of ear)

Inside of Tag Piece B [2]
(Not in View while tags is on the pig)

Tag Piece B [3]
(Inside of ear)

[1] State postal abbreviation imprinted on PIN tags shipped from manufacturer after August 1, 2009
[2] The piece attached to the outside of the animal's ear
[3] The piece attached to the inside of the animal's ear

Table 10. State Codes and Abbreviations (numeric order)

11	ME	Maine	56	SC	South Carolina
12	NH	New Hampshire	57	GA	Georgia
13	VT	Vermont	58	FL	Florida
14	MA	Massachusetts	61	KY	Kentucky
15	RI	Rhode Island	63	TN	Tennessee
16	CT	Connecticut	64	AL	Alabama
21	NY	New York	65	MS	Mississippi
22	NJ	New Jersey	71	AR	Arkansas
23	PA	Pennsylvania	72	LA	Louisiana
31	OH	Ohio	73	OK	Oklahoma
32	IN	Indiana	74	TX	Texas
33	IL	Illinois	81	MT	Montana
34	MI	Michigan	82	ID	Idaho
35	WI	Wisconsin	83	WY	Wyoming
41	MN	Minnesota	84	CO	Colorado
42	IA	Iowa	85	NM	New Mexico
43	MO	Missouri	86	AZ	Arizona
45	ND	North Dakota	87	UT	Utah
46	SD	South Dakota	88	NV	Nevada
47	NE	Nebraska	91	WA	Washington
48	KS	Kansas	92	OR	Oregon
50	DE	Delaware	93	CA	California
51	MD	Maryland	94	PR	Puerto Rico
52	VA	Virginia	95	HI	Hawaii
54	WV	West Virginia	96	AK	Alaska
55	NC	North Carolina			

Note: USDA will issue Tribes a two-character numeric or alpha code if they wish to administer the issuance of their own NUES tags.