

USDA Revises Guidelines for Use of National Uniform Eartagging System Numbers

On March 15, 2011, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) released updated guidelines allowing National Uniform Eartagging System (NUES) tags to be distributed directly to producers and used for general official identification purposes.

NUES tags, more commonly referred to as "brite" tags or "silver metal" tags, were previously only available to producers through an accredited veterinarian as part of specific disease control programs. Under the revised guidelines, producers can obtain these tags directly through their state animal health officials. The guidelines also establish standards for the use of NUES tags as official identification outside of disease programs, with state animal health officials designated to administer and oversee that process.

While NUES tags continue to be an essential tool for animal disease eradication, control and surveillance programs, expanding their availability and use beyond these programs is an important step forward in the nation's animal disease tracing capabilities.

The revised guidelines fulfill Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's promise to producers to offer a low-cost, flexible option for official identification. In its expanded role, the NUES tag provides producers with a low-cost method of identifying animals for interstate movement, thus playing a vital part in animal disease traceability.

The revised guidelines do not apply to sheep and goats. Distribution of NUES eartags for sheep and goats will continue to be administered through the national scrapie eradication program.

A copy of the memo can be found in APHIS' eFOIA Reading Room at www.aphis.usda.gov/foia/downloads/VS/uniform_eartag_system.pdf. If you have questions about how you might use NUES tags, please contact your state veterinarian or APHIS veterinary services area office.

Note to Stakeholders: Stakeholder announcements and other APHIS information are available on the Internet. Go to the APHIS home page at www.aphis.usda.gov and click on the "Newsroom" button. For additional information on this topic, contact Workabeba (Abby) Yigzaw at (301) 734-7255 or e-mail workabeba.yigzaw@aphis.usda.gov.

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