



# Factsheet

## 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 in adult sheep sampled at slaughter by over 99 percent. However, the cooperation of sheep and goat producers is needed to find and eliminate the last few cases in the United States.

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 helps producers follow the regulations.

### How to Get Official Eartags

The National Scrapie Eradication Program provides a limited number of free official ear tags to sheep and goat producers. In response to feedback from and collaboration with the sheep and goat industry, APHIS will provide up to 80 free, plastic tags to first time participants in the sheep and goat identification program through fiscal year (FY) 2020. APHIS is working with sheep and goat organizations to transition toward electronic identification to improve our nation's ability to quickly trace exposed and diseased animals in the event of an outbreak. Our goal is to start to transition to electronic identification by fall 2020.

The no-cost metal tags previously provided to producers will be phased out in summer 2019, when the currently obligated funding is expended. During the phase out, APHIS will continue to provide, upon request, up to 100 serial metal tags free of charge to producers (either regular orange metal serial tags or blue slaughter-only metal serial tags) who haven't received APHIS-provided tags within the previous 24 months. Dealers and markets may continue to receive metal serial tags at no cost through FY 2020.

**To find out if you are eligible for the free tags or to get a flock ID assigned to your flock so you can buy official tags, call 866-USDA-TAG (873-2824).** Producers who prefer another type or color of tag or need more tags may purchase official tags directly from approved manufacturers to fit their needs. See the "Approved Tag Manufacturers" section below for more information.

## **Animals Requiring Identification**

The animals listed below are required by Federal\* and/or State regulations to be identified as part of the National Scrapie Eradication Program when they move between States as part of interstate commerce or if ownership changes. Some states have identification (ID) requirements that are stricter than federal requirements, so the exceptions listed below do not apply in all States. For information on each State's ID and movement requirements, contact the State Veterinarian's office.

### All sheep and goats must have official ID when moving off their premises of origin, EXCEPT\*

- Sheep or goats moving with a group ID and owner/hauler statement. This includes:
  - Sheep and goats under 18 months of age in slaughter channels;
  - Sheep and goats of any age shipped directly to a slaughter establishment or a federally approved market that has agreed to act as an agent for the owner to apply official ID and when all the animals in a section of a truck are from the same flock of origin; or
  - Sheep or goats moved for grazing or similar management reasons without a change of ownership when the animals are moved from a premises owned or leased by the owner of the animals to another premises owned or leased by the owner of the animals. The premises must be recorded in the National Scrapie Database as additional flock premises and commingling must not occur with unidentified animals born in another flock or any animal not part of the flock.
- Castrated sheep or goats under 18 months of age.
- Sheep or goats moving within a State that have only resided on premises and in flocks in the same State and where the animals and premises are owned by persons who do not engage in the interstate commerce of sheep or goats and where the sheep or goats are of a class exempted from official ID by the State while in intrastate commerce.
- Sheep or goats moving within a state to a facility where the animals will be officially identified with official ID assigned to the owner.

## **Official Identification**

Official identification devices, including ear tags 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.

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

## **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 or sell animals of any age that may be used for breeding, or animals over 18 months of age for any purpose, unless they are officially identified.
- The preferred placement for metal eartags in wool sheep is in the left ear, about a third of the way down from the head – where it is more visible and easier to keep out of the way when shearing. This reduces the risk of the tag being struck by the shears and potentially damaging the headpiece or injuring the animal or the operator. For young lambs, leave enough space for growth by leaving one-third of the tag overhanging the edge of the ear.

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. Locations for field offices can be found online at:

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/contact-us>

## **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 metal or plastic tags, radio frequency identification (RFID) tags, RFID implants (there are restrictions on the use of implants\*\*)—and choose what works best for them. For the list of approved tag manufacturers, visit [www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie](http://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 issued by an approved registry listing the current owner or the registration certificate and a completed transfer of ownership form dated within 60 days that lists the current owner. If the registry you use is not approved, you can still use your tattoos if you provide your tattoo prefix and registry to APHIS for inclusion in your flock record and include a copy of your confirmation email or letter with the animal.

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.

Tattoos may not be used as the sole form of official ID for animals moving to slaughter or through a livestock market\*\*.

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*\*\*For more details on the restrictions on the use of implants and tattoos see the NSEP Standards at [www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie)*

*\*\*\*For a list of approved registries see the list at [www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie)*

Owners must ensure the legibility of tattoos. Owners should also be prepared to assist with the tattoo reading process, including using a flashlight or other light source to assist with reading when animals are inspected.

### **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:

#### When you apply official ID:

- The flock ID number of the flock of origin, the name and address of the person who currently owns the animals, and the name and address of the owner of the flock of origin, if different;
- The name and address of the owner of the flock of birth, if known, for animals born in another flock and not already identified to flock of birth;
- The date the animals were officially identified;
- The number of sheep and the number of goats identified;
- The breed and class (i.e. cull ewes, feeder lambs, breeding does etc.) of the animals. If breed is unknown, for sheep the face color and for goats the type (milk, fiber, or meat) must be recorded instead;
- The official ID numbers\*\*\*\* applied to animals by species or the Group Identification Number (GIN) applied in the case of a group/lot;
- Whether the animals were identified with “Slaughter Only” or “MEAT” identification devices; and
- Any GIN with which the animal was previously identified.

#### When you buy or sell animals:

- The number of animals purchased, sold, or transferred without sale;
- The date of purchase, sale, or other transfer;
- The name and address of the person from whom the animals were purchased or otherwise acquired, or to whom they were sold or otherwise transferred;
- The species, breed, and class of animal, and if breed is unknown, for sheep the face color and for goats the type (milk, fiber, or meat) must be recorded instead;
- A copy of the brand inspection certificate for animals identified with registered brands or ear notches;
- A copy of any certificate or owner/hauler statement required for movement of the animals purchased, sold, or otherwise transferred.

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\*\*\*\*The official identification number is the complete number on the official USDA sheep/goat tag, official tattoo, or approved RFID device. It is acceptable to list the first and last number in a sequential series, rather than each individual number.

**More Information**

For more information about scrapie or the National Scrapie Eradication Program, please visit [www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie).

If you have questions, contact the APHIS Veterinary Services Office for your State

(<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/contact-us>)

or your State Animal Health Office

([http://www.usaha.org/upload/Federal%20and%20State%20Health/StateAnimalHealthOfficials\\_rev.pdf](http://www.usaha.org/upload/Federal%20and%20State%20Health/StateAnimalHealthOfficials_rev.pdf)).