Animal ID and Recordkeeping for Sheep and Goats

Scrapie is an incurable, fatal, degenerative disease that affects the central nervous system of sheep and goats. The National Scrapie Eradication Program (NSEP), coordinated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), has reduced the prevalence of scrapie in adult sheep sampled at slaughter by more than 99 percent.

Federal and State regulations require producers to officially identify their sheep and goats under NSEP. You must also keep herd records, showing what animals were added and what animals left the herd/flock. This guide explains those requirements.

How To Get Official Eartags or Implants

NSEP will provide up to 100 free plastic tags to first-time participants in the sheep and goat ID program. We will also provide metal serial tags at no cost to markets and dealers while funds last. Producers who are not eligible for free tags or who prefer another tag type or color can purchase official tags directly from approved manufacturers. Visual tags (where the official ID must be read) and electronic tags (where the official ID can be electronically scanned) are available. Although we encourage using electronic official ID to improve our Nation's ability to quickly trace exposed and diseased animals in the event of an outbreak, it is currently not required.

Call **866-USDA-TAG** (866-873-2824) to find out if you are eligible for free tags or to request flock and premises ID numbers so you can obtain official tags. NSEP pre-dates the Animal Disease Traceability Program. As a result, sheep and goat premises may be assigned a scrapie premises ID, a national premises ID number (PIN) or a State location ID (LID).

Approved Tag Manufacturers

Official ID devices must be approved by APHIS, sufficiently tamper-resistant for the intended use, have good retention, and provide a unique ID number for each animal. APHIS has approved several companies to manufacture and sell official devices, including tags and injectable transponders. We encourage producers to consider the different devices available—including metal or plastic tags, radio frequency ID (RFID) tags, or RFID implants (there are restrictions on the use of implants)—and choose what works best for them. For the list of approved tag manufacturers, go to www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie and click on "Sheep and Goat Identification."

Types of ID Numbers

Premises ID: Permanently assigned to a **specific, identifiable geographic location**. Can include APHIS or State-assigned scrapie premises ID, PIN, or LID. Some premises may have more than one premises ID. For example, they may have a scrapie premises ID and a PIN or LID. PINs contain seven alphanumeric characters. LIDs contain six, seven, or eight alphanumeric characters.

A PIN or LID is required to order **electronic ID tags or implants** (a scrapie premises ID cannot be used). In most States, PINs and LIDs are assigned by the State office: www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/traceability/state-pin

Flock ID: Assigned to a **group of sheep or goats** managed as a unit on one or more premises and under the same ownership. In most States, flock IDs begin with the State postal code. In some cases, the flock ID may be the same as the scrapie premises ID.

Animal ID Exemptions

Nearly all sheep and goats must be officially identified as part of the NSEP before they enter interstate commerce or if ownership changes. However, the following animals are exempt:

- Sheep or goats moving with a group ID and owner/hauler statement. This includes:
  - Sexually intact 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

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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 identified with official ID assigned to the owner.

Important: Some State ID requirements are stricter than Federal requirements. The exceptions listed here do not apply in all States. For information on your State's ID and movement requirements, contact the State Veterinarian's office. Learn more about exemptions to Federal sheep and goat ID requirements at www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie

Tagging Tips

- Sheep and goats only need to be officially identified when leaving the premises or 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.
- Plastic tags are best for animals that require shearing. If you use metal tags, place it in the left ear, about a third of the way down from the head where it is easier to see and 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 operator. For young lambs, leave one third of the tag overhanging the edge of the ear to allow for growth.
- Official tags may not be sold or given to another person. If you no longer need your tags, destroy or return them to the APHIS Veterinary Services District Field Office for your State: www.aphis.usda.gov/animalhealth/contact-us

Tattoos

Animals may be identified with a registration tattoo instead of a tag if the animal is accompanied by a copy of the registration certificate issued by an APHIS-approved registry that lists the current owner or the registration certificate and a completed transfer of ownership form dated within 60 days that lists the current owner. For a list of approved registries, go to www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie

If your registry is not approved by APHIS, you may still use your tattoos if you provide your tattoo prefix and registry name to APHIS for inclusion in your flock record and include a copy of your confirmation email or letter with the animal. Additionally, you may officially identify unregistered sheep or goats with a tattoo that includes your APHIS-assigned flock ID number and an individual animal number. If you have a registered herd prefix, you may ask APHIS to assign it as part of your flock ID number.

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

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

For more details on implant and tattoo restrictions, see the NSEP Standards at www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie

Recordkeeping

Records must be kept for **5 years** after the animal is sold or otherwise disposed. We encourage producers to keep records in an electronic format, such as a spreadsheet. When you apply official ID, you must record the following information:

- 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 identified sheep and goats.
- Each animal's breed and class, such as cull ewe, feeder lamb, breeding doe, etc. If breed is unknown, record the sheep's face color or goat type (milk, fiber, or meat) instead.
- The official ID numbers applied to animals by species or the Group ID Number (GIN) applied in the case of a group/lot. The official ID number is the complete number on the official USDA sheep/goat tag, official tattoo, or approved RFID device. You may list the first and last number in a sequential series, rather than each individual number.
- Whether the animals were identified with "Slaughter Only" or "MEAT" ID devices.
- Any GIN with which the animal was previously identified.

When you buy or sell animals, you must record the following information:

- 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.
- Each animal's breed and class, such as cull ewe, feeder lamb, breeding doe, etc. If breed is unknown, record the sheep's face color or goat type (milk, fiber, or meat) 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.

More Information

To learn more about scrapie or NSEP, go to www.aphis.usda.gov/animal-health/scrapie. If you have questions, call 866-USDA-TAG (866-873-2824) or go to www.aphis.usda.gov/animalhealth/contact-us and select VS Area Offices.