



Electronic Identification – Sheep & Goats



2010 brings with it not only a new year but a new set of rules, as the compulsory Electronic Identification (EID) of sheep comes into force.

This special bulletin aims to make sense of the regulation, what the requirement actually means for farmers and lists the on farm practical issues surrounding the implementation of EID.

The background...

The EU regulation was first announced in 2003. This was in response to the Foot and Mouth outbreak and need to improve the traceability of sheep and goats. A derogation was secured to postpone the implementation of EID until 31 December 2009.

In the UK, EID has replaced the double tagging rules for sheep, but EID is not mandatory for goats because the UK goat population falls below the EU threshold. However, goats will still need to be individually recorded on a holding register/movement documents.

What do I need to know...

Which sheep have to be electronically identified?

All sheep born on or after 31/12/2009 and **not** intended for slaughter within 12 months need to be electronically identified. These sheep need to have two identifiers - one of which must be electronic.

What about sheep intended for slaughter before 12 months old?

These can either be identified by a single electronic tag or a single non-EID tag, both of which will visually only bear the UK flock number.

Why should I use an EID slaughter tag?

The likelihood is that large scale finishers will discount lambs without EID tags as not being able to read their tags electronically will add cost to their businesses. If in doubt

Speak to your auctioneer or lamb buyers before ordering tags and see what they recommend/prefer.

Are there any restrictions on which colour tags can be used?

Yes. For sheep born after 31 December 2009 EID tags must be yellow, so they are easily identifiable. Replacement tags must be red (if not on the holding of birth) and the matching tag in a sheep with an EID bolus must be black.

So the secondary tag for sheep with an EID tag can be any colour apart from yellow, black or red.

Can tags carry extra information apart from the official number?

Yes other management information can be included, so long as it is separate from the official number.

Will I have to have an EID reader?

No, a concession has been granted to allow most sheep farmers to avoid buying a reader. Markets and abattoirs will be able to act as Central Point Recording Centres (CPRC). These CPRCs will be able to record the required individual sheep identities and pass that information back to the vendor or buyer within 48 hours.

Where farm to farm sales take place and identities need to be recorded you will either need to record these animal's numbers manually or invest in a reader.

Will CPRCs accept my own list of numbers if I have a reader?

This will be up to the individual CPRC. It is likely they'll want to read numbers themselves as they will be liable to inspection by the authorities too.

What happens to sheep born before 31 December 2009?

There is no need to electronically identify older sheep or record their movements individually in the holding register.

But from 31 December 2011 these animals will need to be recorded individually on movement documents unless they are moving direct to slaughter or via a market to slaughter. When moving to slaughter a batch movement document can still be used.

Can I use up stocks of existing tags?

No, the way tags are numbered will be changing from 31 December too, so you'll need new tags for all sheep born after that date.

What numbering will be on new tags?

All non-EID tags for sheep destined for slaughter before 12 months old just need the flock number only. EID slaughter tags for sheep intended for slaughter before 12 months old will be printed with the flock mark only. For these animals the flock mark and an individual number will be on the EID chip inside the slaughter tag.

EID tags for sheep not intended for slaughter before 12 months old will carry both the flock mark and the individual number on the tag and on the EID chip inside the tag.

Will the information on the EID chip and the tag look the same?

Largely yes, although on the EID chip the letters UK will be replaced by the numbers 826. This will be followed by your six-digit flock number preceded by a zero and followed by a five-digit individual animal number starting back at 00001.

What happens when a sheep with an EID tag and a non-EID tag loses a tag?

In this case there are two ways to replace the tag. You can either order an identical replacement, in the same way you do for cattle, or, you can cut out the remaining tag and replace it with two new ones. If the latter option is chosen and the sheep isn't on its holding of birth the replacements must be red. Also the old and new tag numbers will need to be cross-referenced in the flock register.

What if a sheep loses both its tags?

In this case you need to fit two new tags and make a note in the flock register entering the sheep as identity unknown and cross-referencing this to the new tag number.

How soon must lost tags be replaced?

You have 28 days from discovering the loss to fit replacement tags. In many situations it will be easiest to keep a stock of replacement tags on farm and simply fit them as you find losses. Replacement tags for sheep still on their holding of birth will be yellow with match-up tag in another colour; all replacements for animals not on the holding of birth will be red.

What happens with movements to different holdings for temporary grazing?

Movements to different holdings where the sheep remain in the same ownership will only need to be batch recorded, with just the number of animals recorded not the flock numbers.

Where the keepership (the day to day responsibility for the sheep) changes then individual identities will need to be recorded if animals are identified with tags bearing an individual number.

Can sheep be upgraded from a slaughter tag to full EID?

Sheep in England with an electronic slaughter tag can be upgraded, but you will need to read the EID number on the chip in the tag and cross reference this with the new full EID tag number in the flock register. If the animal isn't on its holding of birth the new tags will need to be red replacement tags. But, in England, where a sheep has a non-electronic slaughter tag it can't be upgraded to full EID as it has no individual number. It can, however, be upgraded in Wales.

If I buy a reader will it read all EID tags?

Yes, under the rules all readers and tags have to meet specific standards which state that all readers have to be capable of reading all tags. In the North West there is grant aid towards electronic readers and handling systems.

How much will EID tags cost?

Tag costs will vary depending on the supplier, but they are likely to be available from about 65p for a single EID tag. Standard non-EID tags are unlikely to change, so a pair of tags could cost from about 75p upwards.

What will need to be recorded in the holding register and on movement forms?

For animals born and identified after 31 December 2009 individual numbers will need to be recorded when they are first tagged, are moved on or off your holding, die or have a tag replaced or are upgraded. However, most of this recording will not require a single-line entry and CPRCs will send back movement-related entries. Slaughter lambs identified by batch tagging will need to be recorded on a batch basis as at present, additionally, batch within batch recording must take place to record the number of lambs of different flock numbers.

Will movement forms need individual numbers on them?

For animals born after 31 December 2009 movement forms will have to include individual numbers from 1 January 2011. This can be done by attaching a list to an AML1 form. Animals identified with a batch tag will need to be on a batch basis and batches within the main batch will have to be recorded. When moving to a CPRC then the AML1 will only need to record the number of sheep moving.

What about Scotland and Wales?

Scottish sheep farmers won an unlikely victory in Brussels after Euro-MPs recommended an urgent review of the controversial new EID regulations. The Scottish Executive is reassuring farmers that there is no need for immediate action on new sheep tagging rules. They are waiting for the outcome of the review before deciding how to implement the rules. Full implementation details will be sent to all Scottish farmers in the New Year. For further information [Click Here](#).

Further information?

If you require further advice or information on EID please don't hesitate to contact [Kevin](#) who will be able to advise you further.

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