

Sheep and goats identification

The aim of these rules is to maintain a system for the identification and registration of sheep and goats to make possible their traceability, in particular in the event of a disease outbreak.

A. You must

Identification

1. identify all sheep and goats with the correct means of identification within 6 months of birth for intensively farmed animals and 9 months for extensively farmed animals, or before they leave the holding of birth, whichever is sooner;
2. for intra-community trade, identify sheep and goats with two identically numbered eartags; and if identified on or after 31 December 2009, one identifier must be electronic;
3. replace any lost or illegible means of identification within 28 days of noticing their loss or illegibility or before the animal leaves the holding, whichever is the earlier;
4. only keep sheep or goats identified with a single slaughter tag beyond the age of 12 months if the animals are completely traceable, and you must then replace the single means of identification with two new identifiers. For sheep, one of the identifiers must be electronic;



(photo credit: Symtag)



Record keeping

5. for animals born and identified before 31 December 2009 keep on-farm records with the required information, including:

- details of the movement of sheep and goats on and off your holding, including:
 - the date of the movement;
 - the number of animals moved;
 - the destination or origin of the animals moved;
 - the transport details for the animals leaving your holding;

and additionally, for animals born or identified on or after 31 December 2009 these details must include:

- the individual identification numbers of individually identified animals and in the case of batches of animals identified with a single slaughter tag which originate from different holdings of birth, the number of animals with each different flock/herd mark;
 - in the holding of birth, the year of birth and date of identification;
 - the month and year of death of the animal on the holding;
 - the breed and, if known, the genotype;
 - for all animals:
 - an annual inventory of the animals kept at 1 December;
6. make sure that these on-farm records are up to date, kept for at least 3 years from the date of the last entry and are available on request to an inspector.

B. You must not

Identification

1. alter, obliterate or deface any means of identification attached to an animal. However you may apply additional management information provided the legibility of the UK flock mark or UK individual ID number is not affected.



Further advice and guidance

The Guidance for Keepers in England – Rules for identifying sheep and goats gives full guidance on how to comply with the sheep and goat identification rules.

Defra website: defra.gov.uk/food-farm/animals/movements/sheep/

RPA Livestock Identification helpline: 0845 050 9876