

(You may find it useful to read these guidelines in conjunction with a guide on inserting tags in The Farmers Weekly of February 26th 2010, page 36.)

THE GOAT VETERINARY SOCIETY

AN IDENTIFICATION (I/d) GUIDELINE FOR GOATKEEPERS

PERMITTED IDENTIFICATION for goats first identified after December 31st 2009

Each goat must have **two** methods of identification carrying the identical number.

EAR TAG.

At least one of the two means of identification must be an EAR tag. The second method of identification may be:

1. A second ear tag, which may be electronic if you prefer, OR
2. A tattoo, which should have the letters UK, the flock number, and the animal individual number, either in one ear, provided it is legible, or spread between both, OR
3. Electronic bolus. The Goat Veterinary Society does not recommend boluses for use in goats due to the relative fragility of the oesophagus in goats, OR
4. A tamper evident pastern tag, which may be electronic if you prefer.

NOTE. At present, no pastern tags have yet been approved by DEFRA for use in sheep or goats. That is simply because no company has yet submitted their products for official approval. In addition, it has not been established at what age the pastern of the goat stops expanding. It certainly will still be growing at 6 months of age, and even at 9 months some slack would need to be left to avoid the tags cutting into the leg as the goat matures.

INJECTABLE MICROCHIPS

Injectable microchips are not permitted at present as official identifiers. Trials currently under way may lead to their becoming acceptable in future.

COLOUR of tags, including pastern tags, as from 1st January 2010:-

Tags which carry electronic I/d must be coloured **YELLOW**.
If a bolus is used, then the animal must carry a **BLACK** eartag

REPLACEMENT tags must be coloured **RED**, unless the animal is still on the holding where it was born, or where the tag replaces another one with the same number, in which case the house colour may be used.

Non electronic tags may be any colour other than **yellow black** or **red**, unless they are used in conjunction with a bolus or are replacement tags.

THE USE OF ELECTRONIC I/d.

A CAUTION. Whilst electronic I/d is only optional for goats, it is widely used, mainly as a management aid at present. You should please note that no animal should carry more than one form of electronic I/d as they would be likely to "Collide", which makes both tags unreadable.

NUMERICAL INFORMATION.

Each tag, or tattoo, has a 12 digit number allocated. In addition, the tattoo or non electronic I/d must include the letters UK. Where electronic I/d is used, UK is replaced by 0826 on the microchip involved, but not on the visual I/d.

SLAUGHTER

Goats known to be going for slaughter before the age of 12 months need only have a single tag with the letters UK and the herd number. In practice this derogation will rarely be used at present. We anticipate that most goats going for slaughter will be dual tagged.

Some goats born before January 2007 will have an individually numbered single tag or tattoo. If that consists of a herd mark allocated by DEFRA, and an individual number, then it will be perfectly acceptable for slaughter. Where that is NOT the case, including where the tattoo is a breed society issue number, the goat must first be DOUBLE tagged, in line with the rules for any other replacement tags, see below.

Strictly speaking, a goat of similar age going for slaughter that is not for human consumption, must also be double tagged. The alternative is slaughter before the goat leaves the premises.

EXPORTS

For goats going to be exported, there are three practicable alternatives at present. One is two eartags, one of which is electronic. The second would be an electronic bolus accompanied a non electronic **black** tag as above, and the third way would be an electronic eartag with a non electronic pastern tag.

It is currently ILLEGAL to export goats with implanted microchips, and electronic pastern tags are not accepted as an official I/d suitable for animals being exported.

PROBLEMS with ear tags in goats, potentially.

The goat has much thinner ears than sheep so damage to ears from tags is much more likely. In particular, with goats kept on some holdings, snagging of tags on branches and wire can be a problem, with either the ear or the tag giving way. Sometimes a haematoma forms when the tag is put in, and that can lead to infection and a cauliflower ear. In some cases goats have a ritual of chewing out each others eartags.

EAR TAG APPLICATION

These problems can be minimised by using accepted best practice.

1. Site the tag about one third of the way from the base of the ear, no further. This is the strongest part of the ear, and is where the tag is least likely to rip out.
2. Insert the tag by putting the pin, ie, the male part, through from the top of the ear. Retention is worse if the tag is inserted the other way round.
3. Insert the tag so that its margins are concealed with the ear, unless a loop type tag is used.
4. Disinfect the applicator between animals.
5. Always use the correct applicator for the tags being used, and check before releasing the goat, that the tag is properly and firmly in place.

AGE at tagging.

Both methods of identification must be in place by the age of 6 months if the animal is housed overnight, or by 9 months if the goat is kept largely outdoors.

If a goat is taken away from its holding of birth, then it must have TWO officially approved identifiers in place before it leaves the holding, at whatever age, and for whatever reason, EXCEPT that it may be taken to a veterinary surgery for treatment or disbudding.

LIGHTWEIGHT EARTAGS, if approved by DEFRA as official identifiers, are available for goats of any age. These were originally designed for use in lambs planned for slaughter before 12 months of age. However, in many cases they seem to be retained extremely well. They are particularly useful for kids which may be taken for showing, or being sold when young, and in breeds with unusually small ears, such as pygmy goats.

REPLACEMENT TAGS

The law does not allow for official replacement tags to be manufactured UNLESS they are to replace ones that are lost or defaced so that they are unreadable. However, it is quite legal to tag kids with a lightweight tag carrying an IN HOUSE number, for your own management system, and for that tag to be cut out later if you then wish to use a more robust form of I/d to suit your needs, provided that that is done by the age of 6 or 9 months.

Any tags or other I/d that are LOST, or become UNREADABLE, must be REPLACED within 28 days of that being discovered. Where one tag is lost, a replacement bearing the same number may be used, or the other tag may be cut out, and dual new tags used and cross referenced in the farm register.

If two tags are lost, and the number of the animal is not known, a new number must be issued, and IF the previous number can be known for certain, then it should be cross referenced to the new one in the register.

Replacement tags should be of the usual house colour:

- A. If the goat is on the holding of birth.
- B. Where the goat is not on the holding of birth, but the replacement tag carries the same number as the lost tag.

Where the goat is NOT on the premises of birth, and a DIFFERENT number is used on replacement tags, then those tags must be **RED**.

GOATS BORN BEFORE 2003 will not be likely to have an official number. They will therefore now need dual identification before they can be moved off the holding while still alive.

Goats born between 2003 and 2010 but with official identification in place as prescribed by the orders in force at the time of birth, will not need to be re identified unless they lose that identification. However, where an animal had only a single tag, if a replacement tag is needed it will now need DUAL identification as replacement. That includes if it is being sent to an abattoir. This will be in the "House colour" if the goat is on the premises of birth, and **red** if not.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Regulations are implemented by local Trading Standards Officers.

WELFARE

Where a tag is seen to be causing pain, it is legal to remove it. It would however be sensible to talk to a Trading Standards Officer first if possible, other than in a surgical emergency.

Similarly, there have been occasions where replacing ear tags has become impossible. The law does not appear to take account of this possibility, and again, you should inform your Trading Standards Officers and take their advice.

The Goat Veterinary Society would like to hear of any occasions where tagging of any sort causes avoidable pain or suffering. It is helpful if this can be accompanied by photographic evidence. This may eventually help us to seek amendments to the rules which we believe will be workable and beneficial to all.

DISPUTES AND LEGAL STATUS.

The Goat Veterinary Society has produced the above guidelines in good faith, and in consultation with the appropriate authorities. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in them, these notes have no legal status, and are for guidance only. Any questions over specific problems, in particular if there is a dispute over interpretation, should be taken up with the I/d team within the Food and farming group at DEFRA.

Full details of the regulations and accompanying guidance have been sent out to goatkeepers in the post, and further packs can be obtained by telephoning 08459 556 000.

Alternatively they may be viewed on the DEFRA Website.

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/farmanimal/movements/sheep/index.htm>

Nick Clayton BVSc MRCVS