

# DAIRY VETERINARY NEWSLETTER

May 2019

## USDA Clarification Regarding Official Animal ID Tags

Here is some information recently disseminated by USDA APHIS (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service) regarding official identification for disease testing of cattle, sheep or goats (swine or other food and fiber species were not mentioned):

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Testing of cattle/sheep/goats for regulated diseases such as Brucellosis, Tuberculosis, and Trichomoniasis requires an individual official ID for the animal being tested. Without an official ID, it is NOT an official test and may cause complications in interstate/international travel, sales, shows, etc. Identification of drop tags, animal name, or trich tags are NOT official or permanent forms of ID. Official ear tags will have the US shield and/or say “UNLAWFUL TO REMOVE”.

Official individual ID’s appropriate for testing include:

- Official ear tags:
  - Silver brites
  - Orange brucellosis vaccination (bangs) metal tags. Can only be applied at calfhood vaccination
  - Scrapie tags for sheep and goats
  - “840” Animal Identification numbers or AIN (visual or radiofrequency)
- Registered tattoos when the animal is accompanied with the breed registration certificate. *Receiving and sending states must agree to accept this as official ID.* This is common with goats.

If you have any questions, please call the USDA APHIS Veterinary Services office in SLC, UT at 801-524-5010 (end of USDA announcement)

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More information about “OFFICIAL ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (AIN) DEVICES WITH “840” PREFIX”, distributed by APHIS on July 20, 2018 can be found at:

[https://www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability/downloads/ADT\\_device\\_ain.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability/downloads/ADT_device_ain.pdf)

In part, it states: “when using the 840 AIN for cattle, the minimum identification standard is the visual AIN eartag.

Eartags with the AIN are USDA official tags and are:

- Designed for one-time use (tamper evident)
- Imprinted with:
  - AIN (15-digit number starting with 840)
  - Official Eartag Shield
  - Unlawful to Remove
  - Manufacturer's Logo or Trademark (printed or impression of)

### AIN Radio Frequency (RF) Devices

AIN eartags with radio frequency identification (RFID) technology are also available. The RFID transponder, in these options, is [encased] in the visual tag. Such technology is considered supplemental identification (the visual tag remains the animal's official identifier). Tags with RFID technology (referred to as AIN RF tags) must have all 15 digits of the AIN printed on the tag pieces that contain the transponder. The Official Eartag Shield and text, "Unlawful to Remove" must be printed on the other piece. AIN RF tags, when applied, are to be attached to the animal's left ear according to the manufacturer's instructions."

It also mentions these tags that can no longer be applied and are being phased out:

### "Tags with ICAR Manufacturer Code or USA Prefix

Tags that use ICAR manufacturer codes or the USA prefix are being phased out. ICAR manufacturer codes or "USA" can be used as the first three characters for tags manufactured before March 11, 2014 and applied to the animal before March 11, 2015. See "Official Eartags – Criteria and Options" document for more information on, and examples of, tags with the manufacturer code and "USA" prefix at: [http://www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability/downloads/ADT\\_eartags\\_criteria.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability/downloads/ADT_eartags_criteria.pdf)."

### Examples of official tags:





There are also injectable RFID with “840” prefix transponders, sometimes called microchips as they are in pets, usually described for sheep and goats, but sometimes for cattle, horses, llamas, deer and elk:



### Cattle Fever Ticks are Spreading Outside the Quarantine Zone in Texas

Some Utah dairy producers buy cattle from Texas, and some of our veterinarians consult on Texas dairies. Cattle Tick Fever, the first tick-borne livestock disease described in history, is spreading there. The ticks *Rhipicephalus* (formerly *Boophilus*) *annulatus* and *R. microplus* are vector hosts that often carry the protozoan parasites *Babesia bovis* or *B. bigemina*. Tick bites transmit these parasites of red blood cells to cattle, white tailed deer and nilgai exotic antelope. The nilgai antelope, sometimes called “blue bull” antelope, are native to India and were released in Texas as exotics in 1930, and some are hunted now. Some information describes nilgai as a plague, other publications say they are not cold tolerant and are unlikely to become widespread even in Texas. Estimated population in Texas is 15,000.

The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) states: “*Babesia* attacks and destroys the animals’ red blood cells, causing acute anemia, high fever, and enlargement of the spleen and liver, ultimately resulting in death for up to 90 percent of susceptible naive (no exposure to Babesia) cattle.” Cattle Tick Fever is considered non-infectious to humans, but a few cases of babesiosis in humans associated with cattle tick bites, usually with uncertain diagnosis of the species of *Babesia*, have been reported.

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The TAHC maintains a Permanent Fever Tick Quarantine Zone, sometimes called the Systematic Area, from 200 yards to 10 miles wide along the Rio Grande River, running for approximately 500 miles. (It surprised me that part of it is only 200 yards wide). The disease is endemic in cattle in Mexico. However, this year fever ticks have been detected at least 24 miles outside of the Quarantine Zone, east of Laredo near Mirando City. There is another jarea of infestation extending up the Gulf Coast north of South Padre Island. The latest TAHC report of March 31, 2019 shows 2,122 infested or quarantined premises covering nearly 750,000 acres outside the Permanent Quarantine Zone, more than 3 times the size of the permanent zone itself.

The tick fever zone is still only in the very southern part of Texas and is not close to Utah. However, veterinarians working on cattle or with clients buying cattle from Texas are advised to consult with TAHC, including their Monthly Fever Tick Situation Report, and be vigilant regarding ticks on cattle of Texas origin, as the outbreak is currently spreading rather than contained.

Please let us know your comments and suggestions for future topics. I can be reached at (435) 760-3731 (Cell), or [David.Wilson@usu.edu](mailto:David.Wilson@usu.edu).



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