



## Sheep and Goat Official Identification

**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**

**Veterinary Services**  
FiOps District 2  
**Animal and Plant Health  
Inspection Service**  
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Ear tags are one option for official ID of sheep and goats. There are two types of official tags available to producers – plastic and metal. Official tags are available in the following styles:

- a. Serial-numbered tags – Official tags are eight alphanumeric characters long and start with your state postal code. This sequence is the individual animal's official ID. The sequence is not used on any other official tag in the program. Serial tag numbers are recorded and linked to your Flock ID in our database.



- b. Flock Identification Tags – Official tags are ten characters long and start with your assigned Flock ID number. The remaining digits (larger print numbers) are the individual animal's official ID number and will not be repeated on any future orders. If you order flock-style tags, please verify that all tags you receive have your Flock ID number properly printed on them. If any tags have a Flock ID number that is not your assigned number, please **DO NOT USE THEM AND CALL OUR OFFICE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.**



- c. AIN Tags and AIN Radio Frequency ID (RFID) Tags – Smaller/lighter sheep and goat official AIN tags have a fifteen digit number sequence on the front of each tag that begins with the U.S. country code "840." These tags must be ordered directly from the approved tag company and require an additional State ID number (Premises Identification Number or PIN). If interested in this option, please contact our office for additional information.



2. Tattoos are another official ID option and must be applied as follows:
  - a. If you are using tattoos in sheep, your Flock ID number must be tattooed in one ear and an individual animal number must be tattooed in the other ear. While your Flock ID is assigned by USDA, the animal number is assigned by the owner and must be unique to each animal.
  - b. If you are using tattoos in registered goats, the official ID is the registry tattoo applied in each ear as outlined on the breed registration certificate. These animals must be accompanied by the original registration certificate in order for the tattoos to be considered official identification.
  - c. If you are using tattoos in unregistered goats, the official ID is the USDA-assigned Flock ID number tattooed in one ear and an individual animal number in the other ear. While the Flock ID is assigned by USDA, the animal

number is assigned by the owner and must be unique to each animal. These animals must be accompanied by an owner/hauler statement that has the following items:

- i. Name, address, and phone number of owner (and hauler, if different)
  - ii. Date the animals were moved
  - iii. Flock ID number and group/lot ID, if used
  - iv. Number of animals
  - v. Breed/class of animals
  - vi. Name and address of point of origin
  - vii. Name and address of destination
3. Electronic implants\*, or microchips, are a third official ID option provided that the conditions below are met. This is an option for sheep or goats that have been assigned a Flock ID or are registered with national associations that allow the use of ISO 11784/85 compliant (840 series, 15 digit number) implants for registry ID.
- a. The animal is registered with a national registry association and the electronic implant is recorded by the registry on the official registration certificate that is present with the animal;
    - i. OR the animal is unregistered and legibly tattooed with a USDA assigned Flock ID in the ear, tail fold, or flank and accompanied by an owner/hauler statement as described in 2 (c) above;
  - b. The animal is accompanied by a reader that can read the implant;
  - c. The animal is tattooed with a legible "E" if the implant is at the base of the ear, or "ET" if the implant is in the tail fold
- \*Note: These implants must be ordered directly from the ID company and require an additional State ID number (PIN).

Please be advised that states, sales, and shows may have ID requirements that are more stringent than the federal ID requirements. For example, official tags may be required even when an animal has an official tattoo. Please check with individual states, establishments, or shows to determine if any additional requirements exist prior to your arrival.

If you have additional questions, feel free to contact the USDA office scrapie desk at **614-856-4745** or the toll-free scrapie tag line at **1-866-USDA-TAG (873-2824)**. You may also visit the National Scrapie Eradication Program website at <https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/sheep-and-goat-health>.