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# Tagging

All cattle must be uniquely identified by tags in their ears.

## 2.1 Important dates for tagging cattle

- **Cattle born on or after 15 October 1990 and before 1 April 1995** must be identified with an approved ear tag or a tattoo (or both).
- **Cattle born on or after 1 April 1995 and before 1 January 1998** must be identified by an approved tag applied to the right ear that shows the unique alpha-numeric (letters and numbers) identification.
- **Cattle born on or after 1 January 1998** must have an approved ear tag in each ear. Both must show the same unique alpha-numeric identification. The unique identity stays with the animal for all its life.
- **Cattle born on or after 1 July 2000** must have an approved ear tag in each ear. Numeric tags were introduced on 1 January 2000 but made compulsory on 1 July 2000. Animals must be double tagged with both tags showing the same unique number. The unique identity stays with the animal for all its life.

| Date of birth   | Tagging requirements   | Example of tagging format           |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| 15 October 1990 to 1 April 1995                         | Ear tag or tattoo.   | A1234 123<br>B654 3210<br>D123 123C |
| 1 April 1995 to 31 December 1997                        | At least one ear tag with a unique alpha-numeric identity. Includes UK at the beginning.   | UKAB1234 56789<br>UK A1234 56789    |
| 1 January 1998 to 31 December 1999                      | Ear tag in each ear (double tagging) with the same unique alpha-numeric identity for the lifetime of the animal. Includes UK at the beginning. | UKAB1234 56789<br>UK A1234 56789    |
| 1 January 2000 to current (1 July 2000 made compulsory) | Ear tag in each ear with the same unique numeric (numbers only) identity for the lifetime of the animal. Includes UK at the beginning.         | UK666666500046                      |

## 2.2 Tagging newborn calves

Every newborn calf must have an ear tag in each ear showing the same unique identity number. This number is made up of a:

- herd mark; and
- an animal number.

## a When to tag

Calves must be tagged within the following deadlines.

- Dairy farmers – you must fit one ear tag **within 36 hours of a calf's birth**. You are allowed **up to 20 days from the calf's birth to fit the second tag**.
- Beef farmers – you have **up to 20 days from the calf's birth** to fit both tags.

You must fit both tags before an animal moves off the holding where it was born, even if that is before it is 20 days old. You do not need to tag animals that have died before these deadlines.

## b Bison

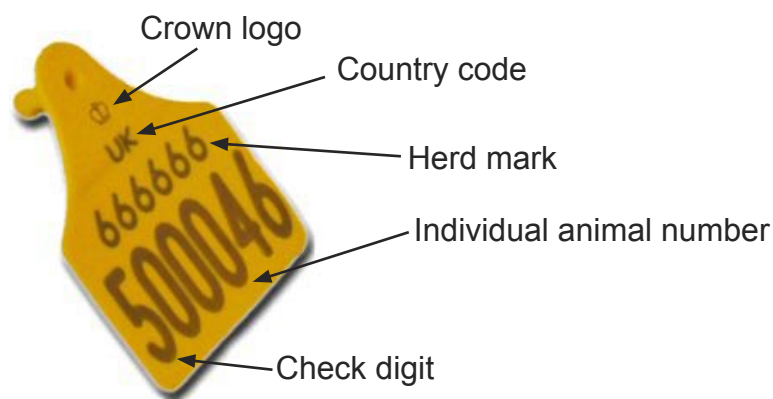
The only exception to this rule is for bison. You can tag them within **nine months** of birth, but they must be tagged before leaving the holding of birth or when separated from their mother, whichever is sooner. You must still fill in a passport application form and make sure that we receive it no later than seven days after the birth.

## 2.3 The ear tag

The tags used for double tagging are known as the **primary** and **secondary** tag.

- The '**primary**' tag may be put in either ear. Since 1 April 1998, primary tags have to be yellow.

### Example of a primary tag



- The '**secondary**' tag must have the same information as the primary tag, but may also contain management information. The secondary tag must be in the other ear from the primary tag.

There are many different secondary tags that you can use, for example, metal, plastic, and button tags.

## 2.4 Tagging of cattle for cultural and historical use

If you keep cattle for cultural and historical use (except for fairs and exhibitions), instead of identifying them by an ear tag it may be permissible to use an electronic identifier in the form of a bolus. However, as this leaves the animal without a visual identifier, you **must** contact us to apply to register the holding for cultural or historic use.

## 2.5 Where to get ear tags

To get ear tags, you can ask any of the commercial ear-tag manufacturers who sell tags approved by us. They will confirm your herd mark with us and we will give you a series of animal numbers (in order).

We record the details of the herd mark and animal numbers on the Ear Tag Allocation System (ETAS). For up-to-date information on ear-tag manufacturers, you can either look on our website at [www.rpa.gov.uk](http://www.rpa.gov.uk) or phone our helpline. When you need more ear tags, contact your manufacturer, who will send them to you.

You should not apply for more ear tags than you will use in one year.

## 2.6 Imported animals

Animals imported from other members of the European Union (EU) should already be double tagged. You do not need to retag these animals (except to replace a lost tag).

You must retag animals imported from countries that are not members of the EU with approved ear tags.

You must also make sure that all cattle imported into Great Britain (GB) since **1 July 1996** are registered and hold a GB chequebook-style passport or an old-style (blue and green) passport and certificate of registration (COR). This applies whether the cattle are male, female, dairy or beef.

For more information on importing animals, please read section 4.7a.

## 2.7 Lost or illegible tags

You must replace lost or illegible tags as soon as possible, but no later than 28 days after you notice the loss or damage.

Lost tags fitted to animals born or imported after **1 January 1998** can only be replaced with a tag showing the same identification number, code and crown logo, as the animal must keep its unique identity for life.

For animals born or imported **before 1 January 1998** you may do one of the following.

- Apply a single replacement tag showing the same number.
- Apply a new single tag showing a new number. You must return the certificate of registration (COR) and old-style (blue and green) passport (CPP1) to us. We will change the details and reissue it as a chequebook-style passport (CPP13).
- Apply a new set of double tags. You must return the certificate of registration (COR) and old-style (blue and green) passport (CPP1) to us. We will change the details and reissue it as a chequebook-style passport (CPP13).

Whenever you apply new tags, you must update your farm records to show the new details.

## **2.8 Rules against switching identities**

Under no circumstances must ear tags be removed from one animal and used on another, and identities cannot be reused.

Legal action may be taken against any keepers found breaking these rules.

## **2.9 Bar-coded ear tags**

A bar code may be included on an official tag for animals that are being exported. (Cattle born in GB do not need to be identified with ear tags that have a bar code.) The importer and exporter will decide, through a commercial arrangement, whether or not this is necessary. British ear-tag manufacturers can issue such tags if they are needed.