


Animal Disease Traceability Framework

Official Eartags – Criteria and Options

May 14, 2013

This report summarizes the criteria and options for official identification eartags.

Minimum criteria for official identification eartags for individual animals:

- Imprinted with a nationally unique official animal identification number
- Official eartag  shield¹

Basic characteristics:

- Tamper evident, high retention
- Other characteristics defined through tag specifications

Table 1. Official Identification Numbers for Individual Animals

Number	Format of Animal Number	Number Examples
National Uniform Eartagging System (NUES)	9 character - 2 State or Tribal ² code - 3 alpha series - 4 digits in a sequential numerical series	23 ELV 4574 PA ELV 4574
	8 character - Swine and other species (except sheep and goats) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2 numeric State or Tribal code ○ 2 alphabetical series ○ 4 digits in a numerical series 	23 AB 4574
	- Sheep and goats (exclusive to scrapie program) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2 alpha postal abbreviation ○ 2 alphabetical or alphanumeric series ○ 4 digits in a numerical series 	PA AB 4574 or PA A2 4574
Animal identification number (AIN)	- 15 digits; 840 are the first three digits (numeric code for USA) Note: 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.	840 003 123 456 789 900 152 123 456 789 USA 000 097 499 999
Flock-based number with herd management number	- Flock identification number (maximum of 9 characters prefixed with State’s postal abbreviation) with a unique herd management number (up to 6 characters). Does not include I, O or Q except as part of a postal abbreviation.	MN0456 4275
Location-based number³ With the herd management number	- Either a premises identification number (PIN) or location identification number (LID) with a unique herd management number PINs have 7 character and LIDs may have 6, 7 or 8 characters and the herd management number may have up to 6 characters.	006ER2A 4275

¹ The official eartag shield is the U.S. Route Shield graphic with “U.S.” or the State postal abbreviation or Tribal alpha code imprinted within the shield. Beginning March 11, 2014 all official eartags manufactured must bear an official eartag shield. Beginning March 11, 2015 all official eartags applied to animals must bear an official eartag shield. APHIS VS authorizes approved tag manufacturers to imprint the official eartag shield on approved tags.

² Tribal alpha and numeric codes are assigned by APHIS when requested by a Tribe (see ADT General Standards for listing: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability/downloads/ADT_standards.pdf).

³ Location identifiers include both the premises identification number (PIN) issued through the PIN allocator and the Location Identification (LID) numbers administered by the State or Tribe

Table 2. Summary of USDA Official Eartags (does not include official reactor tags, etc.)

Official Identification Eartags	General Explanation
Official Vaccination Eartag (Brucellosis) (See Table 3.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restricted use for bovine and bison brucellosis calfhood vaccination.
National Uniform Eartagging System (NUES) Tags (See Tables 4 and 5.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Commonly referred to as “Silver” or “Brite” tags. - Historically used for disease testing and interstate movement. - VS Memorandum 578.12 revised March 15, 2011 to allow distribution to producers through State and Tribal authorities.
Animal identification number (AIN) “840” Tags (See Table 6.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provided directly to producers from manufacturers [or their distributors], or to producers through accredited veterinarians or animal health officials. Various sizes, shapes, colors. Visual only or with variable frequency RFID technology. The visual imprinting of the AIN on the tag is the official identifier for AIN tags with radio frequency technology. AIN tags may be imprinted with additional information for program identity, e.g., age, source programs. <p>Note: 840 AINs are available in microchip implants for equine and other species.</p>
Sheep and goat tags (See Tables 7 and 8.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Serial and flock identification tags including scrapie flock certification program tags approved through the scrapie program and provided at no cost to producers, markets, veterinarians, etc., through State or AVIC offices. “840” tags are also provided for regulatory work in infected and exposed flocks. Producers may purchase customized flock identification or “840” tags from approved tag manufacturers.
Premises identification number (PIN) tags – Slaughter swine (See Table 9.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Imprinted with premises identification number. Various tags approved through authorized manufacturers.

Table 3. Official Vaccination Eartag (Brucellosis)

Tag Information	Description
Program use	Brucellosis
Material type	Metal
Color	Orange <i>(APHIS 91–45–013 “Brucellosis Eradication: Uniform Methods and Rules”, October 1, 2003)</i>
Species used on	Cattle and bison, applied to the right ear only
Information on the tag	Front of tag <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 State code - “V” followed by 2 alpha characters in series - 4 numbers in a sequential numerical series Example: 23VFE0578
	Back of tag <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - “VAC” to reflect the brucellosis vaccination and official eartag shield
Additional printing specifications	“T” and “S” is used following the State code to avoid duplication of numbers when the “V” series has been completely used.
Issued/distributed to	State/Federal employees & accredited veterinarians performing official brucellosis vaccination
Distribution records/reporting	Record of tags issued <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The date, receipt, and the first and last serial number of the tags issued should be recorded. Record of tags applied <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Permanent record of tags applied. - Record of brucellosis vaccination (VS Forms 4-24 and 4-26)
Other comments	CFR definitions: Official vaccination eartag. An APHIS approved identification eartag conforming to the alpha-numeric National Uniform Eartagging System which provides unique identification for each animal. The eartag shall have a “V” followed by 2 letters and 4 numbers. States which require more official vaccination eartags than the number of combinations available in the “V” series of tags shall use a “T” or “S” followed by 2 letters and 4 numbers. Duplicate reissue of official vaccination eartags shall not be made more often than once each 15 years.
How to obtain	State and Federal animal health officials, accredited veterinarians. For use only when bovine/bison calves are being vaccinated against brucellosis.



Table 4. National Uniform Eartagging System – NUES Tag
9-character Format
 (Commonly referred to as a “Silver” or “Brite” tag)

Tag Information	Description
Program use	Not a specific disease program tag
Material type	Primary metal. Small plastic tag options have also been approved.
Color	Silver and some color options (orange is reserved for brucellosis vaccination)
Species used on	Cattle most common. Acceptable for other species except sheep/goats.
Information on the tag	Front of tag <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 numeric representing State or Tribal code, or 2 alpha characters for State postal abbreviation or Tribal code - 3 alpha characters in an alphabetical series (omit “V” and “T” as first alpha in the series) - 4 digits in a sequential series Example: 60 ABC 0502
	Back of tag <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Official eartag shield - “VS” is imprinted adjacent to the shield on tags purchased by APHIS VS - “VS” is not imprinted on NUES tags purchased by States or Tribes.
Additional printing specifications	Printing other information is allowed as long as the print size specification of the required information is maintained.
Issued/distributed to	Federal & State animal health officials, accredited veterinarians. Distribution directly to producers from accredited veterinarians or State/Tribe Animal Health Officials is optional and determined by the State or Tribe.
Distribution records/reporting	Tag distribution records maintained by the State or Tribe. In some States, the administration of the NUES tags may be shared with the VS Area office. The Animal Identification Management System may be used for maintaining the distribution records.
Other comments	States and Tribes may have up to 2 NUES tag types provided through the APHIS warehouse. Options could include using an alpha prefix instead of the standard numeric format or a different color.
How to obtain	Contact the State and Federal animal health officials, Tribal authority, or accredited veterinarians. Approved NUES tag listing is provided at: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability/downloads/ADT_device_nues.pdf .



Table 5. National Uniform Eartagging System – NUES Tag
8-character Format with State/Tribe numeric code

Tag Information	Description
Program use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 8 character NUES tags with State/Tribe numeric code are not used for a specific disease program and may not be used in place of a scrapie program tag for sheep and goats <p>NOTE: 8 character NUES tags with State/Tribe alpha code are reserved for the scrapie program. See scrapie program serial tags for more information.</p>
Material type	Metal
Color	Silver and other color options
Species used on	Most commonly used on species with smaller ears (deer/elk, swine, etc., except sheep and goats).
Information on the tag	<p>Front of tag</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 numeric characters representing State or Tribal code or - 2 alpha characters for State postal abbreviation for scrapie program tags - 2 alpha characters in an alphabetical series - 4 digits in a sequential series <p>Example: 23BG0575</p>
	<p>Back of tag</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Official eartag shield - "VS" is imprinted adjacent to the shield on tags procured by APHIS VS - "VS" is not imprinted on NUES tags purchased by States or Tribes.
Additional printing specifications	Printing other information is allowed as long as the print size specification of the required information is maintained.
Issued/distributed to	Federal & State animal health officials, accredited veterinarians. Distribution to producers through accredited veterinarians or State/Tribe Animal Health Officials is optional and determined by the State or Tribe according to VS Memorandum 578.12 revised March 15, 2011.
Distribution records/reporting	Tag distribution records maintained by the State or Tribe. In some States, the administration of the NUES tags may be shared with the AVIC office. The Animal Identification Management System may be used for maintaining the distribution records.
Other comments	
How to obtain	Contact the State and Federal animal health officials, Tribal authority, accredited veterinarians. Approved NUES tag listing is provided at: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability/downloads/ADT_device_nues.pdf .



Table 6. Animal Identification Number (AIN) “840” Tags

Tag Information	Description
Program use	Applicable for all official identification requirements
Material type	Plastic: With or without RFID
Color	Various colors
Species used on	Various sizes and shapes. Eartags are approved separately and specify for which species they can be used. Either ear application, but left ear recommended to avoid conflict with placing of brucellosis calfhood vaccination tattoo in right ear of female bovine/bison eligible calves.
<p>Information on the tag For describing 2-piece tags, the designation of “Tag Piece A,” is the piece attached to the inside of the animal’s ear (visual from the front of the animal). “Tag Piece B” is the piece attached to the outside of the animal’s ear (visual from behind the animal).</p> <p>Additional printing specifications</p>	<p>Tag Piece A: Inside of ear; visible from the front of the animal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Official eartag shield - 15-digit code with 840 as first 3 digits (numeric code for USA) - Manufacturer’s logo or trademark (printed or impression of) - 2D symbology code representing the AIN (tags printed after July, 2013) <p>Tag Piece B: Outside the ear; visible from behind the animal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Official eartag shield - UNLAWFUL TO REMOVE <p>- Imprinting the AIN on Tag Piece B is optional. If this is the case, the tag set is packaged so that the tag pieces stay together as a pair before being applied. <i>Note: Print specification for swine tags is different due to species anatomical differences in providing functional visibility of information imprinted on swine tags.</i></p> <p>All tags have minimum print size specifications for required information imprinted on the tags. Other information, most applicable to the panel tags, may be imprinted on the tag if it does not reduce the readability of the required information.</p> <p>Tags with RFID must have all 15 digits of the AIN printed on the tag pieces that contain the transponder.</p>
Issued/distributed to	<p>USDA approves all “840” AIN devices and allocates AINs only to authorized manufacturers that use the numbers on approved devices.</p> <p>AIN manufacturers distribute tags through AIN managers with whom they have an agreement and directly to State/Federal animal health officials. AIN manufacturers may be AIN managers.</p>
Distribution records/reporting	<p>The entity (animal health officials or AIN manufacturer or managers) that provides the tag to the producer is responsible for having the distribution records entered/submitted to the Animal Identification Management System (AIMS). Likewise, if the tag is distributed to an AIN distributor, the distribution record is to be submitted to the AIMS. When issued for sheep and goats, the tag record must be administered through the scrapie program tag application of AIMS.</p> <p>A premises identification number (PIN) or Location Identifier (LID) of the farm or ranch is required and is used for reporting the distribution record to the Animal Identification Management System.</p>
Other comments	Tag pairs displaying the same AIN (duplicate AINs) are available for application

	to the same animal only (combination of visual tags or visual and RFID).
How to obtain	Producers and State Animal Health Officials may purchase AIN tags from AIN managers representing authorized AIN tag manufacturers (contact AIN manufacturers for information on their AIN managers). See listing at: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability/downloads/AIN_device_list.pdf

AIN Tags with 840 prefix

AIN Panel Tag (Visual Only)	AIN RF Button Tags	AIN RF Panel Tags
		
Example of "Industry Logo" AIN Tag	Paired AIN Visual/RFID Tag Set	
		

AIN Tags with ICAR Manufacturer Code and “USA” prefix

Mfr Code and USA Prefix AIN Tags	AIN Tag with Mfr Code	AIN Tag with “USA” Prefix
<p>AIN Tags that use the manufacturer codes (900 series) or the “USA” prefix are official for tags manufactured before March 11, 2014 and applied to animals before March 11, 2015.</p> <p>These tags do not have the Official Eartag Shield imprinted on the tag.</p>		<p>Photo Not Available</p>
AIN tags with “USA” and Truncated Animal Number		
<p>APHIS has recognized as official a variation of the AIN with the USA prefix.</p> <p>Eartags imprinted with “USA” followed by the 8- or 9-digit number applied to animals before March 11, 2015 are recognized as official for the life of the animal.</p> <p>For example, the 15 character number, “USA 000 097 499 999” may have USA 97 499 999 imprinted on the tag.</p>		