

## Why Tag and Record Sheep?

### Summary

- If direct subsidies are claimed, adhering to Cross Compliance and Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC) is essential.
- There is a series of Statutory Management requirements (SMR's) covering livestock identification and traceability that must be complied with.
- There is a requirement under EU and Scottish Law to ensure that keepers of sheep are complying with rules relating to traceability.

### Introduction

If direct subsidies are claimed (Basic Payment Scheme, LFASS, Scottish Suckler Beef Support Scheme, Scottish Upland Sheep Support Scheme, Beef Efficiency Scheme and some SRDP options), adhering to Cross Compliance and Good Agricultural and Environmental Conditions (GAEC) is essential. There are also a series of Statutory Management requirements (SMR's) covering livestock identification and traceability that must be complied with, plus there is a requirement under EU and Scottish Law to ensure that keepers of sheep are complying with rules relating to traceability.

#### Why bother?

Sheep tagging and record keeping is part of Cross Compliance for the Basic Payment Scheme and is essential to allow authorities to keep track of sheep should there be a disease outbreak. Looking back to the Foot and Mouth outbreak, sheep moved all over the country with authorities knowing little of their movements.

If there is non-compliance then sanctions can apply from a warning letter to no subsidy and/or prosecution. Even if no subsidy is claimed, sanctions can and will apply until compliance is achieved; this of course, all has to be subject to inspections.

#### Inspections

The dreaded phone call comes – a sheep inspection! What are the main issues found?

It is without fail sheep tagging and record keeping. It is something that must be kept up-to-date and be accurate. In 2014, 31% of inspections resulted in a penalty ranging from a warning letter to over 15% of the claim being reduced, the most common reduction being 3%.



## Tagging

Comprehensive guidance is available on the Scottish Government's website:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/animal-welfare/IDtraceability/SheepandGoats>

What must be done first is to make sure tagging is correct then focus on the records. Below are a few basics points:

### When to tag?

All sheep must be tagged within 9 months of birth or before they leave the holding of birth unless under a concession.

### What to tag with?

There are four basic types of tags:



A coloured pair of tags (not red or black) one of which contains an EID chip. These tags are used primarily for breeding stock born on the holding.

A coloured single EID slaughter tag (not red or black). This tag is used primarily for lambs born on the holding for slaughter and can be used on lambs up to 12 months old.



A pair of red tags (one EID). These tags are used for re-tagging bought in sheep over 12 months old.

A red slaughter tag. This tag is used on bought-in lambs (up to 12 months old) that have lost their original slaughter tag. They cannot be upgraded or kept beyond 12 months of age.



Lambs can be tagged with a slaughter tag if they are going to be sold within 12 months or double tagged if they are to be kept longer. (There is the option to upgrade home bred lambs tagged with a slaughter tag if they go past 12 months excluding lambs with red slaughter tags).

Tags must be correctly used, do not use slaughter tags in older sheep or half a double set of tags in sheep under 12 months.

Tags must be replaced within 28 days of discovery. An identical tag to the one lost can be purchased but in practice take the remaining tag out and put two new ones in. It is important to note that bought in sheep must be retagged with RED tags.

Common problems found at inspection are:

- mismatched tags
- failure to use red tags
- not replacing tags within 28 days of discovery
- failing to upgrade tags after 12 months
- failure to tag on time
- too high a percentage of tags lost.

## Record Keeping

Correct tagging is only half the issue. Record keeping is another major area of Cross Compliance failure. An area that can with a bit of thought be easily improved.

Records have to be kept up-to-date. Every time a sheep is tagged (identified) whether with a slaughter or double tag, or a replacement tag is used record the details. When recording details of replacement tags, remember to include the original tag number if known, and replacement number.

When recording the numbers of sheep arriving on the holding also make sure the flock marks are identified in the records. Recording accuracy coming onto the farm has to be above 90%. A common problem area is failure to identify sheep coming onto the farm as numbers have been missed when read at the point of sale. This can lead to problems at inspection if an unexpected flock mark is found. To avoid this problem there are several options:

- Use ScotEID – hold sheep back until you have seen the report of the on movement to determine its accuracy. Sheep should be kept back from the main flock for a period as good biosecurity - make it a habit!
- Buy a simple stick reader and read them all so there is a record, replacing any lost tags (with red ones) or get the seller to supply a list.
- Read them manually, this is easier with small batches.
- Record deaths, keep a continuous record and SAMUs movement documents.

Other common problems with records found at inspection are:

- poor or a lack of information
- incorrect or incomplete SAMUs
- failure to identify or keep a replacement register
- movement records not complete
- death record not maintained.

If the old green book is being used it does not contain the identification or replacement record. The records will therefore not comply unless that information is recorded separately.

Use the Orange book, this can be downloaded from the Scottish Government's website.

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/grants/A-Z/MovementRecords/SheepandGoatsFlockregstr>



An inspector once said. "If you use the orange book you will be going a long way to having a successful inspection."

There are also problems that lead to enforcement rather than Cross Compliance issues, such as:

- failure of the receiving keeper to notify SAMU/ScotEID
- failure to retain movement documents
- incomplete movement documents
- failure to register as a keeper on seasonal holdings

The biggest mistake made is not writing something down at the time and trying to compile records weeks or months later. Use of a diary is essential as information gleaned from this can also be used if it helps with an inspection.

Set up a simple system, that suits the farm. A further step can be to use electronic systems linked to computers that record the individual animals. They have their advantages as management information can then be kept that can be used to monitor and increase the performance of the flock. There are many systems in place. Don't

rush and take time to make sure the system is practical and sensible for your farm business.



It is very important to note. If the paper records are a mess, a computer system does not solve the problem!

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