



# Frequently Asked Questions: Animal Disease Traceability Rule

## (9 CFR Part 86)

April 26, 2024

### Q: What is animal disease traceability?

A: Animal disease traceability (ADT), or knowing where diseased animals and where at-risk animals are, where they've been, and when they were at that location, is very important to ensuring a rapid response when animal disease events take place. ADT does not prevent disease; however, an efficient and accurate traceability system helps reduce the number of animals involved and exposed in a disease investigation and reduces the time needed to respond. Reducing the number of animal owners impacted by an animal disease event reduces the economic strain on owners and affected communities.

### Q: Why is APHIS implementing this new rule?

A: APHIS collaborated extensively with stakeholders to consider future technological improvements to ADT. Through these discussions, and previous comments in the Federal Register on the topic, it became clear that electronic identification (EID) and records for livestock movement are critical for safeguarding animal health. In January 2023, APHIS published a proposed rule in the Federal Register and received more than 2,000 comments to consider before publishing the final rule. As a result, USDA is committed to improving an electronic system using EID technology that enables rapid tracing of sick or exposed animals and a rapid response to animal disease.

### Q: How much will EID tags cost producers?

A: EID tags will be available at no cost to producers through their State Veterinarian's Offices. EID tags can also be purchased directly from manufacturers and distributors at market rates.

### Q: How do producers acquire no-cost EID tags?

A: All of the no-cost EID tags are being distributed via the State Veterinarian's Office in your state. Please contact them. For a list of State

Veterinarian's Offices contact information, please visit [this link](#) supplied by the National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials.

### Q: How will EID eartags assist producers?

A: The proven key to protecting U.S. livestock health, producers' livelihoods, and the U.S. economy is swift detection, containment, and eradication of the disease. Having a strong ADT system— supported by EID —helps us quickly pinpoint where disease is, provide the least disruption to our producers, and keep healthy animals alive and moving to market.

### Q: What animals will be impacted by the new EID rule?

The current ADT rule covers all sexually intact cattle and bison 18 months of age or older (which excludes most feeder cattle), all dairy cattle of any age, and all cattle and bison of any age used for rodeo, exhibition, or recreational events. The current ADT rule only applies to the interstate movement of covered classes of cattle and bison. The new EID rule will apply to the same covered classes of cattle and bison moving interstate.

### Q: What types of identification are approved for use in cattle and bison under this rule?

A: Each of the following official identification devices and methods are approved for use under part 86:

- An official identification ear tag, beginning 180 days after publication in the Federal Register will be required to be both visually and electronically readable.
- Brands, registered with a recognized brand authority and accompanied by an official brand inspection certificate, when agreed to by the shipping and receiving state/Tribal animal health authorities.
- Tattoos and other identification methods acceptable to a breed association for registration purposes, accompanied by the

breed registration certificate, when agreed upon by the shipping and receiving state/Tribal animal health authorities.

- Group/lot identification when a group or unit of animals is managed together as one group throughout the pre-harvest production chain.

**Q. If my animal is already identified with a visual-only official identification tag, will I be required to apply an electronically readable tag?**

A. No, if your animal has been tagged with a visual only official identification tag prior to the rule's effective date, you are not required to apply an electronically readable tag to the animal. All visual-only official identification tags applied to cattle and bison prior to the date the rule is effective will be considered official identification for the lifetime of the animal.

**Q. How does ADT benefit producers?**

A. ADT has benefitted producers by reducing the number of herds involved in disease investigations and quarantines. Prior to ADT, low levels of documentation and individual animal identification required more herds and cattle to be quarantined and tested during disease investigations to rule them out. The required interstate movement documentation and official identification of livestock has reduced the average time to trace out diseases from months down to minutes. ADT allows a much more focused response that does not require quarantine of nearly as many herds. This is especially important to allow as many producers as possible to continue their business without disruption.

**Q. How do official EID eartags enhance traceability?**

A. Official eartags provide animal health officials with a specific starting point from which to trace diseased or potentially diseased (exposed) animals. The required tag distribution records associate the official identification number with the person that received the device. Without official identification, animal health officials' ability to accurately trace an animal's movements can take months or may never be achieved. Official eartags provide the opportunity to conduct a disease investigation from two points of reference rather than just one.

EID ear tags facilitate faster and more accurate animal identification data collection which increases the efficiency of the response activities, resulting in less disruption to the herd, and thus less impact on producers and communities. If metal ear tags have been used, the response activities take more time and require more interaction with animals due to the increased restraint needed to properly read the tag numbers. Metal tags also require manual data entry, increasing the likelihood of transcription errors. This time-consuming method is disruptive to normal herd operations, increases stress on the animals, and increases the risk of injury to animals and handlers. The more efficiently and effectively animal health officials can complete a trace and response activities, the faster we can regionalize and compartmentalize animal disease outbreaks to mitigate adverse economic impacts.

The sheep industry has had tremendous success with official identification expediting traceability for scrapie. As part of the National Scrapie Eradication Program (NSEP), a cooperative State-Federal industry program, 92 percent of cull breeding sheep bear an official identification tag at slaughter, primarily using flock identification eartags applied at the farm of origin. This identification made it possible in 2010 for USDA, as part of the scrapie surveillance program, to trace scrapie-positive sheep from slaughter to the flock of origin or birth 96 percent of the time, typically in a matter of minutes.

**Q. What role do states and Tribes play in the implementation of the ADT rule?**

A. USDA supports states and Tribes, the primary administrators of the animal disease traceability activities, via cooperative agreements. This approach to improving ADT allows states and Tribes to develop systems that work best for their livestock industries, producers, and others in their jurisdiction.

**Q. Under this ADT regulation, what do I need to move my livestock interstate?**

A. Unless specifically exempted, covered livestock moved interstate would have to be officially identified and accompanied by an interstate certificate of veterinary inspection (ICVI) or other documentation agreed upon by the shipping and receiving states (such as an owner-shipper statement or a brand inspection certificate). The regulations define approved methods of official identification for each species.

**Q. How do I know what eartags are official?  
What types of eartags are recognized as  
“official” under the rule?**

A. Official eartags are a common method of official identification of several livestock species. The regulation requires that the U.S. Official Eartag Shield is imprinted on all the official eartags. You can also recognize official eartags via their numbering systems:

- National Uniform Eartagging System (NUES).
- Animal Identification Number (AIN).
- Location-based number system.
- Flock-based number system.

**Q. What happens if my animal loses its official identification eartag or other device?**

A. If an animal loses its official eartag and needs a new one, the person applying the new one would have to record the following information and maintain the following information for five years:

- Date the new official identification device was added;
- Official identification number on the new device; and
- Official identification number on the old device, if known.

This recordkeeping requirement will aid State, Tribal, and Federal officials when it is necessary to trace animals.

**Q. What is an interstate certificate of veterinary inspection (or ICVI)?**

A. An ICVI, often referred to as a health certificate, is an official document issued by an Accredited Veterinarian, or a Federal, State or Tribal Animal Health Official, for the animals that are being shipped interstate. The locations the livestock are shipped from and shipped to are listed on the certificate. If the animal is not required to be officially identified, the person completing the ICVI would specify the exemption that applies. Under specific circumstances, the traceability regulation provides options other than ICVIs for the interstate movement of livestock. For documentation other than an ICVI, the shipping and receiving state must be in agreement to allow the movement to occur. Some examples of these other documents include brand inspection certificates, or an owner shipper statement.

**Q. Can you explain more about the movement of livestock on Tribal land?**

A. Tribal lands follow the same traceability system as the state or states they are in, unless the Tribe

chooses to have its own traceability system separate from the state. If the Tribal land straddles a state line, then livestock can move within the Tribal land, even across state lines.

**Q. Who will hold the information needed to conduct traces? How will USDA gain access to this information when a disease event occurs?**

A. In most cases States and Tribal Nations maintain ADT information. USDA maintains information systems that support ADT and follows secure data standards to ensure compatibility with State and Tribal Nation databases so that only the essential information is provided to USDA and other States and Tribal Nations when needed for animal disease programs or investigations.

**Q. What will USDA do to keep my information confidential?**

A. These regulations uphold and build on existing USDA disease program regulations, under which confidentiality has always been maintained. There are provisions in the law for the protection of confidential producer data held by USDA. Producer information gathered by USDA through ADT efforts is treated as information maintained under existing disease program regulations and, therefore, is exempt from provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.