

# Requirements for Cattle Identification

## - A guide for cattle keepers on the requirements relating to cattle identification

The **Cattle Identification Regulations 1998 (as amended)** and the **Cattle Identification of Older Animals Regulations 2000** implement EEC requirements relating to the ear tagging, passports and registration of cattle, and the subsequent record keeping on farm.

### Why do I need to identify cattle?

Cattle need to be identified for traceability:

- to identify the herd of origin, and to ensure the integrity of British beef; and
- to enable tracing during disease outbreaks.

### How are cattle identified?

From 14th April 1998, all cattle must be identified with DEFRA Approved Ear Tags, as follows:

#### General requirements

There must be one primary yellow ear tag, which is distance readable, and a secondary ear tag with the same number as the primary ear tag.

These tags should be placed on different ears.

Both tags will have the same herd number and individual animal number.

If a keeper discovers an ear tag, applied under these Regulations, that has become illegible or lost, it

should be replaced, within 28 days of discovery, with an ear tag of the same type, bearing the same number.

#### Specific requirements for dairy herds

From 1st January 2000, the first ear tag must be applied within 36 hours of the birth of the animal and the second tag must be applied within 20 days of birth.

#### Specific requirements for any other herds

From 1st January 2000, both tags must be applied within 20 days of the birth of the animal.

### What are cattle passports?

A cattle passport is a government-issued document which states the animal's:

- date of birth;

- official ear tag number;
- ear tag number of the dam;
- breed; and
- sex.

This document must accompany the animal throughout its life, from birth to death, and will include all movements, changes of ownership, passages through cattle markets, etc.

The passport provides for a notification card to be completed when the animal is moved and sent to the British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS), within three days of the movement.

### **Do I need a cattle passport?**

It is a legal requirement that **all** cattle must be correctly identified, and those born after 1st July 1996 must be accompanied by a cattle passport.

### **How do I obtain cattle passports?**

- Prior to 1st July 1996, all older cattle should be in possession of a Cattle Tracing System (CTS) document, which is obtainable from the BCMS. After 1st July 1996 and up to 14th April 1998, all cattle on a green passport should also have a CTS document, also obtainable from the BCMS, enabling movement cards to be sent to the BCMS within three days of the movement. Cattle born after 15th September 1998 require a cheque book style passport obtained from the BCMS.
- After 1st January 2000, cattle keepers must obtain a cattle passport within 27 days of birth. Cattle passports may be obtained from the BCMS, presently located at Workington, Cumbria (helpline: 0845 050 1234).
- It is an offence to have cattle without passports outside the time limits stated above.

### **What records am I required to keep?**

#### **On farm cattle breeding records**

The following records must be kept:

- Date of birth
- Ear tag number of the calf
- Breed
- Sex
- Dam's identification number

#### **a. Cattle movement records**

The following records must be kept:

- Date of the movement onto or off a holding
- Ear tag number of the calf
- Breed
- Sex
- Age or date of birth when known

- Holding from which moved (including the name and address of the person from whom delivery was taken)
- Holding to which moved (including the name and address of the person taking delivery)
- Date of any deaths and where the animal is sent for disposal
- Date of any replacement ear tags\*

\*Please note that cattle keepers should obtain any replacement tags from an official supplier. You should use the same identification numbers for cattle born after 1st January 1998. Cattle born prior to 1998 can be re-tagged using the same number or re-tagged as cattle born after 1st January 1998, which should be cross-referenced in the movement book.

#### **In what form should the records be kept?**

- a. We recommend that cattle keepers should maintain records in the format suggested ([see Annex A](#)).
- b. This format covers both on-farm Cattle Breeding Records and the Cattle Movement Records.

#### **How long must I keep these records?**

Records must be kept for ten years from the end of the calendar year in which the last entry was made.

#### **What are the consequences of non-compliance?**

Failure to comply with these requirements is a criminal offence.

The maximum penalty on conviction in a Magistrates' Court is a fine of £5,000 and/or three months imprisonment, and the maximum penalty on conviction in a Crown Court is a fine of £5,000 and/or two years imprisonment.

This leaflet is not an authoritative interpretation of the law and is intended only for guidance.

For further information, please contact **Environmental Protection, Animal Health Section, Swindon Borough Council, Premier House, Station Road, SN1 1TZ**

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