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| **Cattle**  **Tagging Best Practice**  **Leaflet** | A4 DAERA Logo process.png |

Best Practice for Managing Cattle Ear Tags

Requirements

Each animal must be double tagged with identically numbered yellow plastic tags, one tag in each ear. The tags can either be two primary tags or one primary and one secondary tag.

Calves should be tagged within 20 days of birth unless they leave the herd before 20 days in which case they should be tagged before leaving.

Ordering Ear Tags

Do not order more ear tags than you would use in one year.

Correct position for ear tag



**It is important that ear tagging is carried out correctly to ensure the welfare of your animals. Taking care will also minimise ear tag losses and associated problems.**

* Make sure that the operator is properly trained and competent.
* Make sure that the tag is fitted correctly by following the manufacturer’s instructions and use the correct pliers for the model of tag you are fitting.
* Fit in cool weather (where possible) to minimise ‘fly strike’ and infections.
* Secure the animal’s head to prevent jerking and so avoid tearing the ear during tagging.
* Apply tags under hygienic conditions. Make sure that the ear, tag and applicator are clean. You may wish to consider cleaning your equipment and the area in which you are tagging with disinfectant or alcohol. You may also wish to consider using a topical insecticide on your animal, but should take care to comply with instructions for each product used, so that health and safety regulations are met, and to avoid residues in meat or milk. Check that the chemical you are using does not remove the writing on the tag.
* Check regularly after tagging to ensure no infection occurs.
* The tag should be placed through the ear, avoiding the main blood vessels and ridges of cartilage.
* Store unused tags securely in a clean container.

**Problems with ear tags**

* If you have problems with tag retention make sure you are fitting them strictly in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions. In many cases tags can become detached from the animal because of incorrect insertion. As with any other product, if you have problems with tags, you should discuss these with your supplier. A veterinarian should be consulted in cases of infection.

DAERA welcomes any feedback you give us about official cattle ear tags. The form is available from your tag supplier or can be downloaded at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/ear-tag-information>.

Once completed it should be sent back to the Identification Registration and Movement Branch at Room 930, Dundonald House, Upper Newtownards Road, Ballymiscaw, Belfast BT4 3SB or e-mailed to [DAERA.ImplementationSupportUnit@daera-ni.gov.uk](mailto:DAERA.ImplementationSupportUnit@daera-ni.gov.uk).

All cattle should be regularly inspected to ensure both tags are in place and the identification numbers are legible. Under the Cattle Identification (No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1998 missing/illegible tags should be replaced within 28 days of being discovered or before the animal is moved from the herd, whichever is the sooner.