

Electronic identification of sheep and goats

At a glance

Victoria is introducing an electronic identification system for sheep and goats from 1 January 2017. The system will be introduced in phases. Industry will be consulted and supported during its implementation.

All sheep and goats born in Victoria on or after 1 January 2017 will require an electronic identification tag before being dispatched to a saleyard, abattoir, knackery or another property.

The electronic tags will be linked to National Livestock Identification System (NLIS).

From mid-2017, all saleyards and abattoirs will be required to read electronic tags of sheep and goats and upload this information to the NLIS database.

Electronic identification tags have been used successfully in the cattle industry for over a decade.

This decision will significantly improve the ability to track sheep and goats in the event of an animal disease emergency or a food safety event, protecting existing and future market access opportunities.



Phased Implementation

24 August – Announcement of new approach for electronic identification for sheep and goats

29 September – Consultation on draft standards and transition package ends

October – Standards and transition package announced

November – Producer workshops and other support commences

1 January 2017 – Sheep and goats born will now be electronically tagged

Agriculture Victoria will consult with industry on draft standards and transition package

- The Victorian Sheep and Goat Identification Advisory Committee (SGIAC) and the government have developed draft electronic NLIS (Sheep & Goats) standards.

The draft standards will be available for consultation with industry until 29 September 2016.

- Funding will be available to support the introduction of the new system for the Victorian sheep and goat industries.
- There will be workshops available for producers in addition to other support.
- Consultation on the transition package will also run until 29 September 2016.

Frequently Asked Questions

Why do we have to change?

The introduction of mandatory electronic tagging of sheep and goats is a critical reform that will enable the prompt tracing of animals during disease or food safety events.

The current system needs improvement and an electronic system is the most cost effective and practical system for Victoria.

Victoria's sheep and wool production is valued at over \$2 billion, with products sold in profitable local and export markets. Implementing mandatory electronic identification of sheep and goats will provide trading partners with increased confidence in the safety and origin of Victoria products, protecting and enhancing access to these markets.

Electronic identification tags have been mandatory in the cattle industry for over a decade. In addition to the traceability benefits, the storage of individual animal data provides opportunities for producers to further improve their production systems.

When is the change being implemented?

The change will occur in phases and in close consultation with industry. Implementation will start on 1 January 2017, with all sheep and goats born on or after this date required to be identified with an electronic tag before leaving the premises of birth.

Are there any exemptions?

A tagging exemption applies to certain dairy goat and elf breeds because the vascular ears of these breeds may become infected following the attachment of an ear tag.

Will feral goats need to be tagged?

No.

Why is traceability in sheep and goats important?

Sheep and goats act as vectors in the spread of infectious disease such as foot-and-mouth disease, anthrax and other diseases that have potentially significant market access and human health impacts.

It is essential that sheep and goats can be located quickly and accurately to manage and minimise the spread of disease or the impact on food safety.

What help will there be for the sheep and goat industries?

Once the standards governing the operation of the system are finalised, Agriculture Victoria will help industry understand its responsibilities and the productivity opportunities associated with the technology.

Funding will be available to help support industry implement the new system. Once the transition package including funding is finalised, Agriculture Victoria will provide guidelines and information to assist industry apply for support.

Where can I find more information?

Visit: www.agriculture.vic.gov.au/sheepEID