



What to Know About USDA's Updated Traceability Rule?

Securing the Herd. Faster Response.

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), an agency under the U.S. Department of Agriculture, has updated tagging requirements for certain classes of cattle moving across state lines. Since 2013, these cattle have required some form of official animal identification: either a brand, tattoo, group ID number, metal clip tag, or electronic ear tag (EID). Beginning on November 5, 2024, if you move these specific classes of cattle across state lines using an ear tag as your form of official animal identification, those tags must be an EID tag—not a metal clip tag.



This requirement still only applies to sexually intact beef cattle that are 18 months or older; dairy cattle of all ages; and any cattle that are going to rodeo, show, or exhibition. **These criteria are not changing under the updated rule.**

This requirement still only applies to the types of cattle mentioned above when they move across state lines. Cattle that are staying within one state their whole life do not need an EID ear tag. **That hasn't changed under the updated rule.**

This requirement does not apply to feeder cattle. **This updated rule is not about feeder cattle.**



EID tags are encoded with a unique, 15-digit number specific to that animal; that's it. The only additional data points that will be stored in your state veterinarian's database are contact information for the person receiving the tag, contact information for the person distributing the tag, and the date of distribution. That is all. These tags cannot track greenhouse gas emissions or the constant GPS location of cattle. No other type of data is collected or available to APHIS. The public cannot access the data stored in state or federal animal health databases.



The threat of Foot-and-Mouth Disease and other foreign animal diseases has never been greater than it is today. We need a modernized, accurate, and fast traceability system in order to respond quickly to an animal disease outbreak. This will help keep more herds safe during an outbreak, let those producers get back to business faster, and minimize the financial hit to the cattle industry. **The best insurance policy we can have against the next major disease incident, like FMD or BSE, is having a traceability system that works better than the one we have today.**



Last year, Congress instructed APHIS to spend \$15 million on EID tags for producers. Those tags have been handed out at no cost to all the state veterinarians across the country. Contact your state veterinarian for instructions on how to get free tags for your operation. Of course, producers are also able to purchase tags from the manufacturer at the average price of \$3 per head.

Additional Resources

For more information, contact your state veterinarian or state department of agriculture.