

## 2.1 Identification of Livestock

This section describes the general identification procedures for livestock, official Identification, and record keeping.

### Objective

1. Livestock identification is a cornerstone on which the National Animal Health Program is based. The ability to accurately identify and trace the movement of livestock cannot be overstated. It is essential to maintaining and ensuring a healthy livestock population.
2. Accredited veterinarians are an integral part of this process. The accredited veterinarian must carefully record the identity of animal(s) they inspect or test in the course of performing their official duties and functions. Records of animals identified are the only means of tracing diseased animals to the location where they were identified. The following information should be recorded:
  - a. species
  - b. breed
  - c. sex
  - d. age
  - e. tags, tattoos, leg bands, brands or electronic implants
  - f. colour or markings
  - g. registration numbers (if purebreds).
3. In the case of purebred animals, the information on the registration/pedigree certificates must be verified for animals being identified as purebred on a health certificate or test chart. Accredited veterinarians must not insert an ear tag into the ear of an animal bearing a Health of Animals (HofA), a Canadian Livestock Identification Agency (CLIA) or an Agri-Tracabilité Québec (ATQ) ear tag, which may compromise the ability to trace the animal. Record the identity of the animal with the ear tag already in place.

### Official Identification

4. Three official animal identification systems have been approved by the CFIA:
  - 1) HofA ear tag,
  - 2) ATQ/CLIA ear tags, and
  - 3) legible tattoos.

While all three of these forms of identification are acceptable to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), tattoos alone are not permitted for cattle

and swine. Mexico's *Secretaria de Agricultura, Ganadería, Desarrollo Rural, Pesca y Alimentación (SAGARPA)* accepts HofA and CLIA/ATQ ear tags.

5. Accredited veterinarians may mark or cause an animal inspected to be marked with a tag or in other such manner as the Minister may direct so as to identify the animal. This would include, but is not limited to, livestock inspected or tested for export, disease eradication programs, or Canada Health Accredited Herd (CHAH) programs.

## HofA Ear Tags

6. When HofA ear tags are used, they must be inserted in an animal's left ear. These tags come in two sizes. The larger one is used to identify cattle, elk and bison. The smaller one is used to identify sheep, goats, pigs, and deer.
  - a. Ensure that the proper size is used.
  - b. Ear tags are available to accredited veterinarians through CFIA district offices.
  - c. Ear tags should be placed in the proximal third of the anterior border of the animal's ear. The alpha-numeric sequence must face "out." That is, the number should appear on the dorsal surface of the ear. When inserting an ear tag, always leave a small space between the edge of the ear and the outer margins of the tag. The district veterinarian will demonstrate the proper technique if clarification is required.

### *Exceptions*

7. Exceptions: a HofA ear tag does not have to be applied:
  - a. if an animal bears a legible tattoo, in accordance with a recognized registered breed association;
  - b. if an animal bears a HofA ear tag or a CFIA-approved tag applied by the industry's Canadian Cattle Identification Program.
  - c. Ear tags should not be applied to horses. Horses are to be identified by describing the animal, freeze brand, lip tattoo (see [2.2 Identification of Horses](#)).
  - d. Alternate means of identification have been negotiated with the USDA for feeder swine from Canada.

## Other Identification

8. Horses are usually identified by means of diagrams associated with official documents, and ratites are identified by leg band or microchip. Reference to specific export identification requirements are contained on the export certificate for the species being exported. Consult with the district veterinarian for details.

## Record Keeping and Administration

9. HofA ear tags are identified in alpha-numeric sequence and are distributed by the CFIA in boxes containing 100 tags. The tag numbers issued to each accredited veterinarian are recorded in an ear tag registry maintained at the district office.
10. Accredited veterinarians must maintain a record of the ear tags issued to them, including where and when they were used. These records are to be maintained for a minimum of 10 years. As previously mentioned, records of animals identified are the only means of tracing diseased animals to the location where they were tagged. It is imperative, therefore, that orderly records of animal identification be maintained in a safe location.
11. CLIA/ATQ tags are issued and records are maintained by autonomous organizations. For more information: [Canadian Livestock Identification Agency](#) or [Agri-Traçabilité Québec](#).