

# FARM SUSTAINABILITY STANDARDS

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Livestock Identification  
& Traceability

## UNDERPINNING REQUIREMENTS

**Sustainable Agriculture Programme**



Department of  
**Agriculture, Environment  
and Rural Affairs**  
[www.daera-ni.gov.uk](http://www.daera-ni.gov.uk)

An Roinn  
**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil  
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department o'  
**Fairmin, Environment  
an' Kintra Matthers**



## Introduction

The aim of this standard is to protect public and animal health and support the agri-food industry by promoting a robust traceability system for cattle, sheep, and goats.

By complying with this standard, you do more than meet your legal obligations, you **protect your business and add value to your livestock**.

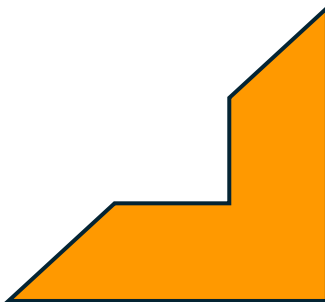
Full identification, accurate contemporary record-keeping and timely notification:

- **Provides evidence of lifetime traceability**, which builds trust in Northern Ireland beef, lamb, and dairy products.
- **Increases market confidence**, helping secure access to premium markets and potentially better prices for your produce.
- **Protects your income** by reducing the risk of penalties under support schemes.
- **Safeguards your herd and livelihood** by enabling rapid disease control and reducing the risk of major stock losses.
- **Reduces fraud and theft risks**, giving you greater security and peace of mind.

All requirements are set out in legislation. In summary, you must:

- **Register with DAERA** and obtain a herd and/or flock number before keeping cattle, sheep, or goats.
- **Correctly identify animals** within the required timeframes.
- **Notify DAERA** of all births, deaths (cattle only), and movements within the required timeframes.
- **Maintain an up-to-date register** with all required details.

Compliance with these requirements supports rapid detection, tracing and containment of disease, protecting your animals, your business, and the wider industry. Early action prevents disease spread, avoiding devastating financial and reputational impacts



## Livestock Identification and Traceability - Cattle

The aim of this standard is to protect public and animal health and support the agri-food industry by promoting a robust traceability system for cattle, sheep and goats.

Requirements	Farmers must	Farmers must not	Exceptions
Owner of establishment with cattle must have a cattle AGN	Register with DAERA before keeping cattle		
Farmers must identify bovine animals as required by legislation	Double tag all calves born on a holding with DAERA approved ear tags within 20 days of birth, or before they leave the holding, whichever is earlier	Remove or replace ear tags without permission from DAERA	
		Alter or deface an ear tag	If applicable, farmer may enter management information in blank space provided for this purpose on the secondary tag
	Re-identify all cattle imported from outside the EU, including from GB, with NI issued tags on the establishment of first arrival in NI, within 20 days of their arrival		
	Replace lost or illegible (unreadable) tags within 28 days of discovering the loss or illegibility or before the animal leaves the holding, whichever is earlier		

## Livestock Identification and Traceability - Cattle

The aim of this standard is to protect public and animal health and support the agri-food industry by promoting a robust traceability system for cattle, sheep and goats.

Requirements	Farmers must	Farmers must not	Exceptions
Farmers must notify births, deaths, and movements to DAERA as required by legislation	Notify all births of cattle on a holding to DAERA no later than 27 days after the birth		
	Notify all deaths of cattle on a holding to DAERA no later than 7 days after date of death		If a renderer has recorded a death on NIFAIS within 7 days, DAERA will accept this as notification, however it remains the farmer's responsibility to ensure all deaths have been notified within 7 days.
	Notify all movements of cattle onto and off a holding (including cattle lost or stolen) to DAERA within 7 days of the movement		
	Deliver all notifications directly to DAERA either via NOL (preferred) telephony, or paper MC1/MC2	Give sellers copy of MC2 movement notifications to anyone else to deliver on their behalf.	
	Record accurate details on all notifications, including tag numbers, animal details, relevant dates and buyer/seller details where applicable.	Omit required details or enter false information on notifications.	
	Record following details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ear tag number</li> </ul>		

## Livestock Identification and Traceability - Cattle

The aim of this standard is to protect public and animal health and support the agri-food industry by promoting a robust traceability system for cattle, sheep and goats.

Requirements	Farmers must	Farmers must not	Exceptions
Farmers must maintain an up-to-date register with all the required details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• replacement tags and re-tags and the date they were applied</li><li>• colour, breed, sex</li><li>• date of birth</li><li>• Dam's identification number if the calf was born on your holding</li><li>• Date of death</li><li>• Date of movements, number of animals and serial number of movement documents for all moves on and off holding</li></ul> Name and address of the premises where and animal is moved to or moved from including place of disposal of a carcase		
	Keep the up-to-date register in a format approved by DAERA (paper, electronic or online)		
	Keep the on-farm register for 10 years from the date of the last entry and make it available on request		

## Livestock Identification and Traceability - Cattle

The aim of this standard is to protect public and animal health and support the agri-food industry by promoting a robust traceability system for cattle, sheep and goats.

Requirements	Farmers must	Farmers must not	Exceptions
Farmers must not buy or sell livestock in contravention of herd or animal level restrictions	Comply with notices preventing movement of animals under IRM restrictions IDQ, DOBQ or NNO.		In exceptional circumstances farmers may sell animals under IRM restrictions or from herds under IRM restrictions provided they have applied for and received a licence from DAERA to move specific animals.
	Comply with notices preventing movements of animals from herds under IRM restrictions IRM1, IRM2 or IRM6.		

## Livestock Identification and Traceability - Sheep

The aim of this standard is to protect public and animal health and support the agri-food industry by promoting a robust traceability system for cattle, sheep and goats.

Requirements	Farmers must	Farmers must not	Exceptions
Owner of establishment with sheep must have a sheep AGN / Owner of establishment with goats must have a goat AGN	Register with DAERA before keeping sheep		
	Register with DAERA before keeping goats		
Farmers must notify movements to DAERA as required by legislation	Notify all movements of sheep and goats onto and off a holding to DAERA within 7 days of the movement		
Farmers must identify sheep and goats as required by legislation	Identify all sheep or goats within 9 months of birth or within 6 months of birth if intensively kept (kept for milking or normally housed overnight) or before the animal leaves the holding, with two identifiers with matching numbers (including an EID device for sheep)		
	Re-identify all sheep and goats from outside the EU (including from GB) with NI issued tags on		

	the establishment of first arrival in NI, within 20 days of arrival		
	Replace lost or illegible (unreadable) tags within 28 days of discovering the loss or illegibility before the animal leaves the holding, whichever is earlier		
		Alter or deface an ear tag	
Farmers must maintain an up-to-date flock register with all the required details	Record following details of your establishment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flock code</li> <li>• Name &amp; address</li> <li>• Type of production</li> </ul>		
	Record details of all events within 7 days of the event or within 48 hours for movements to Central point of recording		
	Record following event details: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Births(when tagged)</li> <li>• Deaths</li> <li>• Replacement tag details</li> <li>• Dates, number of animals and serial number of movement documents for</li> </ul>		

	<p>movements on or off the holding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Details of the annual inventory</li></ul>		
	<p>Retain your flock or herd register until at least 3 years have passed since every animal referred to in it has either died or left your holding and ensure your records are available for inspection on demand</p>		



## Inspections and Checks

Cattle and sheep identification inspections will be carried out on selected herds and flocks to ensure farmers comply with the requirements of this standard. In addition, DAERA staff will carry out an administrative check of the Northern Ireland Food Animal Information System (NIFAIS) database in respect of late notifications, movements of animals under IRM restrictions and movements of animals from herds under IRM restriction.

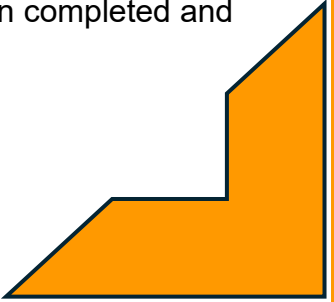
At a cattle identification inspection (CII) the following checks will be completed:


- Ear tag numbers of all cattle.
- Tagging of all animals with the DAERA-approved tags listed on the DAERA website at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/ear-tag-information>
- Tagging of all animals within 20 days of birth and prompt replacement of lost or illegible (unreadable) tags;
- Records kept by keepers, which should correspond with information stored on NIFAIS;
- Actual animals kept on the holding, which should correspond with information stored on NIFAIS; and
- Records kept by keepers, which should meet cattle identification requirements, and all movements, birth, and deaths reported within the timescales noted above.

Further information on cattle identification and registration can be obtained from DAERA Veterinary Service on 0300 200 7840 or on the DAERA website at: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/identification-registration-and-movement-cattle>.

At a sheep identification inspection (SII), the inspector will check a sample of your sheep/goats to ensure that they are tagged correctly and that their tag numbers are recorded in your on-farm records. They will check your holding register, your movement documents and, where appropriate, your lists of tag numbers given to you by a Central Point of Recording (CPR) for movements off your holding. CPRs include approved markets, meat plants and export assembly centres.

During on-farm inspections inspectors will check that:

- Sheep/goats are tagged in accordance with the legislation, including the replacement of lost tags.
  - Movement documents for movements on and off the holding have been completed and retained in date order.
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- CPR tag lists for movements of sheep to a CPR have been retained in date order with the keeper's movement document and holding register; and movement documents for animals leaving a CPR have been retained in date order with the holding register. Note: You must ensure that the information on documents given to you by a CPR is accurate, including your name and address and flock number, the date of movement, the transport details, the number of animals in the batch, and the total number of tag numbers provided. You should also read the tags in a sample of sheep you have bought to ensure that they are on the document.
  - For farm-to-farm moves, all individual tag numbers are recorded accurately on the movement document.
  - Records in the flock or herd register are in accordance with the legislation. The following events must be recorded:
    - Births;
    - Movements on/off;
    - Replacement tags (including the cross-referencing of old and new tags where appropriate);
    - Deaths; and
    - Annual inventory - The number of sheep/goats on your holding is consistent with your annual inventory.

Further information on sheep and goat identification and registration can be obtained from DAERA Veterinary Service on 0300 200 7840 or on the DAERA website: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/identification-registration-and-movement-sheep-and-goats>

