



REGISTRATION OF ESTABLISHMENTS (LAYING HENS) REGULATIONS (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2003

All laying hen establishments (production sites) under the scope of Council Directive 1999/74/EC on the welfare of laying hens must be registered and allocated a distinguishing number. This is implemented in Northern Ireland through the Registration of Establishments (Laying Hens) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 (as amended). Similar legislation has been made in England, Scotland, and Wales. This legislation does not apply to establishments with fewer than 350 Laying Hens or with Breeding Hens.

This Department's Agri-food Inspection Branch is the Registrar.

If you have more than one production site a separate application for each site will be required. A single production site is one at a particular geographical location with epidemiological links between any individual hen houses on the site. If you need help with the completion of the form(s), please contact the Department's Egg Marketing Inspectorate at the address given below.

The Distinguishing Number

The distinguishing number is comprised of a digit indicating the farming method (0 - Organic, 1 – Free Range, 2 - Barn, 3 – Enriched Cages), code of the Country of origin (UK) and a unique identification number which is preceded by **9-** for Northern Ireland producers. This number will be the medium for tracing eggs placed on the market for human consumption.

The initial digit(s) indicating the farming method(s) are allocated to individual hen houses on a production site and will be subject to regular verification checks of compliance with legislative requirements for the particular farming method.

Egg Marketing Regulations require Class A eggs to be stamped with this code, which designates the producer's distinguishing number and identifies the farming method.

Establishments (production sites) with 350 or more Laying Hens

Owners of these establishments **must** complete the Application Form [EMR2B – Application for Registration of an Egg Production Establishment](#)

Establishments with fewer than 350 Laying Hens when eggs will be graded as Class A, or with more than 50 hens and selling ungraded eggs at local markets

These establishments do not have to be registered under the Registration of Establishments (Laying Hens) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003. However, it is compulsory to stamp all Class A eggs with a code designating the producer's distinguishing number and identifying the farming method. Also, any producer with more than 50 hens selling eggs at a local market must register with the Department as even ungraded eggs sold in this way must be stamped with a distinguishing number.

Establishments with Breeding Hens selling surplus hatching eggs for human consumption

Where eggs are sold to a food business, either for grading as Class A or for the manufacture of egg products, the production site must be registered, an identification code allocated and the site inspected for Food Hygiene standards.

It is therefore important that producers with fewer than 350 hens who wish to market their eggs as Class A or as ungraded at a market, and producers with breeding hens sending eggs for human consumption, should complete the application form [EMR2D - Application for Egg Marketing Registration and Distinguishing Number](#) in order to be included in a supplementary register and obtain a distinguishing number.

Establishments with Laying Hens but not selling eggs either as Class A or ungraded at a local market

Producers selling their own ungraded eggs direct to the consumer, via farm gate sales or door-to-door, are exempt from egg stamping arrangements but still need to register (complete application form [EMR2B](#)) if they have flocks of 350 or more laying hens.

For further information or advice please contact:

**Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, Agri-food Inspection Branch,
Poultry & Eggs, Post Room, Ground Floor West, Clare House, 303 Airport Road West,
Belfast, BT3 9ED. Tel: 028 90 520905 E-mail: AFIB.EggsTeam@daera-ni.gov.uk**