

Frequently Asked Questions - BeID

How will the new numbering string look?

To introduce bovine EID, the current numbering string used for cattle identification will need to change to an International Committee for Animal Recording (ICAR) standard and an International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) standard. To adhere to these requirements, the numbering string will change to align with sheep reads and will become a "What You See Is What You Get" (WYSIWYG) number. The most appropriate configuration of the identification numbering string for bovine animals is either the two-letter alpha country code (GB) or the three-digit numeric country code (826) and a unique code for the animal consisting of a maximum 12 digits. Unlike current cattle tags, there will be no check digit.

The new identification number will consist of a 0 prefix, a six-digit herd number, and a five-digit identification number starting at 70000. This numbering string will provide many years before the 30,000 numbers available per holding are used. When a keeper reaches the maximum tag number of 99999, a new herd number will be allocated, and the identification number will restart at 70000. Sheep will use the same numbering string up to 69999 for the identification number.

The numbering format for newborn calves shown on the tag will be:

C	C	S	H	H	H	H	H	H	A	A	A	A	A
G	B	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0	0	0	0

The numbering format held on the EID electronic chip will be:

C	C	C	S	H	H	H	H	H	H	A	A	A	A	A
8	2	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	0	0	0	0

(C = Country coder, S = Series number, H = Herd number and A = Animal number)

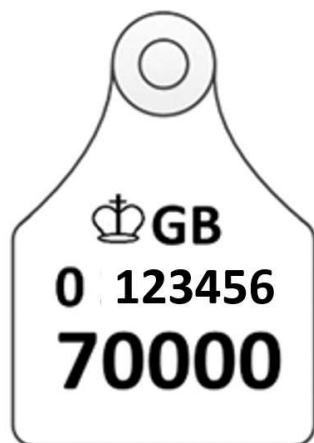


Figure 1: example cattle ear tag, illustrative purposes only.

Can Low Frequency (LF) ear tags be WYSIWYG?

The primary and secondary tag will be printed with the same tag number. One of these tags will also include an EID chip encoded with the same tag number that is visually displayed on the face of the tag. This is known as WYSIWYG ('what you see is what you get'). Scanning the EID tag with a reader will display the number printed on the tag; 'GB' will display as '826', the internationally recognised code for the UK.

Can Ultra High Frequency (UHF) tags be WYSIWYG?

Yes, as above.

Will other official data be added to the EID ear tag?

LF and UHF ear tags have the capability to store additional data. However, due to the complexity of updating information to ensure it remains current and the consequences of losing that ear tag and, therefore the data, the only official information held on the ear tag will be the animal's unique identification number.

Can I use my LF EID sheep reader for reading LF EID cattle?

Yes, by aligning the LF numbering string with sheep and complying with ISO 11784 and ISO 11785, LF stick readers can be used for reading both sheep and cattle ear tags.

LF electronic identification for sheep has been in place since 2010, with sheep keepers, livestock markets, and abattoirs investing in LF readers. Many sheep keepers also keep cattle. If low frequency was used for cattle, further investment would be minimised.

Can I use an UHF cattle reader to read LF EID?

No, the type of tag can only be read with the same type of RFID reader. A UHF reader can only read a UHF tag and would not be able to read an LF EID tag.

What ear tags and readers are commercially available?

The vast majority of manufacturers of ear tags and readers in the UK currently supply low-frequency equipment for sheep EID or for management purposes for cattle on-farm. Currently, the commercial supply of ultra-high frequency ear tags and readers is very limited. Ear tags for the English national herd (over 5 million cattle) and readers,

whether stick readers or race readers for keepers, markets, abattoirs, and collection centres, will be needed.

Do LF and UHF perform differently?

Yes, low-frequency (LF) and ultra-high frequency (UHF) ear tags and readers have different performance characteristics, with the latter potentially allowing a 'read' to take place at further distance than low frequency albeit also with a wider range, which may cause the reader to 'read' beasts in adjacent pens etc. LF and UHF ear tags and readers also have different interference characteristics.

Maximising read rates is very important to ensure the gathering of traceability information and to allow for smooth business processes at high animal throughput locations such as markets and abattoirs. If a beast is not 'read', then this may cause a temporary stoppage to business processes whilst the error is rectified.

Maximising 'read' rates between ear tags and readers, that may be manufactured by different manufacturers, is ensured by globally recognised ISO standards. The standard for low frequency is ISO 11784. The ISO standard for ultra-high frequency, ISO 6881, is expected to be ratified by ISO shortly.

Have the EU mandated LF EID?

It is voluntary for EU member states to introduce Bovine EID. However, if an EU member state decides to introduce Bovine EID, they are required to follow Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2019/2035 and Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2021/520, which requires Bovine EID to comply with ISO standards 11784 and 11785. ISO standards 11784 and 11785 apply to LF frequency only. These rulings have implications for both Northern Ireland and UK trade.

Will retro-tagging the national herd involve changing the animal identification numbering string?

Yes, ISO standards 11784 for LF and 6881 for UHF require a compliant numbering string, and our current numbering string does not comply with either standard. The numbering string will have to change for tagging newborns and retro-tagging the national herd. The newborn numbering string described above will involve a '0' prefix before the herd mark, removing the check digit and the identification number starting at 70000.