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## Electronic Identification (EID) Readers and their use in a Sheep Production Enterprise

Owning a handheld or panel EID reader provides producers with the ability to read EID tags of sheep on their property. Using a reader can offer producers the potential to improve flock management, as well as implementing individual animal management. When used in conjunction with many of the farm management software packages now available, the storage and analysis of data can be a powerful tool in decision making and business development.

### How does an EID tag reader work?

There are several different types of readers available to producers. A range of these are shown below:



*Fig. 1 Examples of Handheld Readers*

### Handheld readers

There are a wide range of styles of handheld readers, varying in capabilities from a simple reader that relies on uploading to a computer or readers that display the scanned EID number on its own screen, through to readers that can connect wirelessly via Bluetooth technology to scale indicators, computers and palms. The type of reader you purchase depends on your own enterprise requirements.

### Read range for handheld readers

Handheld readers have a read range of between 20 and 40 cm 360° from the tip of the wand. This, combined with the length of the reader itself (up to 60cm) allows scanning of sheep in yards without getting too close to the animals.

It is important to note that handheld readers are sophisticated electronic devices. Using the readers to hit animals, even gently, can damage the reader, greatly reducing read range and possibly causing the reader not to work at all.

### Using a handheld reader

When using a handheld reader, you must first make sure that the tag you want to read is within the range of the reader. For most readers, it is then simply a matter of pressing the read button which will be located on the reader in an easily reached position.

Most readers come equipped with an audible beeper, and/or light and/or vibration, which will be activated when a successful read occurs.

### Downloading from handheld readers

Once a scanning session has been completed, it can be downloaded to a computer, scale indicator or palm using companion programs that are provided with the device. In some cases, this process can also be conducted using Microsoft Excel.

Once the EID numbers have been successfully downloaded, they can be used as the animals primary identification, or may be cross referenced against existing herd management numbers. This allows the producer to easily identify each animal when they are scanned in the future.

Handheld readers can also be integrated with weighing systems to further improve herd management. For more information on this topic, refer to the 'Setting up an integrated EID scanning and weighing system' Agriculture note.

## Panel Readers

As with handheld systems, there is a wide range of panel readers available. The type of panel reader purchased depends on individual business requirements. Panel readers are particularly useful when you have large numbers of stock.



*Fig 2 Panel reader set up with scale indicator and three way drafting system.*

### Read Range

Panel readers have a read range of between 55 and 150 cm which extends 360° from the panel. It should be noted that panel readers are multi-directional and cannot be made to read in one direction only, however, the distance they read can be adjusted. With this in mind, it is important that when installing a panel reader, care is taken to ensure that the panel will scan only the tags of the sheep you want to have scanned. Most panel readers come equipped with an audible beeper and/or light which will be activated when a tag is successfully read.

### Panel Mounting

Another important point to note is that for the panel to work correctly, they must be properly installed. Due to the requirement of panels to emit an electronic signal in order to read the NLIS tags, metal mounting may interfere with the signal and severely impede accurate reading of tags. Before installing a panel reader, you should check with the supplier regarding mounting requirements.

### Important note

Most panel readers do not come with any means of number storage. Due to this, panel readers often need to be integrated with a scale indicator, computer or palm as a means of downloading and retaining the electronic identification number of any scanned animals. For more information, refer to the 'Setting up an integrated EID scanning and weighing system' Agriculture note.

## Where can I find more information?

Department of Primary Industries NLIS Extension Team

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### General Information:

The following are useful contacts for further information:

#### NLIS Queries in Victoria

For the NLIS in Victoria call DPI's toll-free NLIS Helpline on 1800678 779 during business hours.

#### DPI Website:

[www.dpi.vic.gov.au](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au)

#### Sheep CRC Website

[www.sheepcrc.org.au](http://www.sheepcrc.org.au)

#### Ordering NLIS Devices Online

You can order NLIS devices on-line using a credit card by going to the DPI web site [www.dpi.vic.gov.au](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au) and following the prompts to Livestock Tags Online.

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