



## Identification of Sheep and Goats in Victoria

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*The National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) for Sheep and Goats assists with the tracing of sheep and farmed goats for food safety, disease control and market access purposes.*

### Tagging Requirements

Under Victorian NLIS (Sheep & Goats) legislation, all sheep and farmed goats born after the 1 January 2006 that are to be consigned to a saleyard or another property must be identified with an approved NLIS (Sheep) tag. NLIS (Sheep) tags are stamped with the Property Identification Code (PIC) of the property on which they are used and the NLIS logo.



*Figure 1. An NLIS (Sheep) tag showing the NLIS logo and a PIC.*

Sheep and goat producers are also required to:

- Ensure their properties have a Property Identification Code (PIC). To obtain an application for a PIC, visit a DPI office or call DPI's Helpline on 1800 678 779.
- Provide a National Vendor Declaration (NVD) when dispatching sheep or farmed goats of any age to a saleyard or abattoir, or to another property with a different PIC. To obtain NVDs contact Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) on 1800 683 111.

When selling previously purchased sheep or goats that were already NLIS identified, producers have the following options;

1. record on the NVD all the PICs on the already NLIS tagged animals, or
2. attach a pink NLIS (Sheep) Post-breeder tag (with their own PIC printed on it) to each animal.

If producers have purchased sheep from a number of different properties the latter option may be more practical.

In Victoria, tagging exemptions currently apply for sheep and goats born prior to 1 January 2006, and to lambs and kids consigned from property of birth directly to an abattoir on an 'over-the-hooks' basis. The 'over-the-hooks' exemption will be reviewed in 2008, please contact the DPI helpline 1800 678 779 to find out the latest information.

Dairy Goat breeds have also been granted an exemption from tagging until suitable NLIS accredited tags become available. Consignors of dairy goats being dispatched to other properties or to saleyards will still need to provide the receiver with a National Vendor Declaration (NVD) or equivalent.

After 1 January 2009, all sheep and farmed goats will need to be identified before leaving the property.

Some processors may already require that animals they purchase are NLIS tagged. It may pay to consult with your local agent or abattoir prior to selling sheep or goats.

### Types of NLIS Sheep Tags

There are two types of visual NLIS (Sheep) tags approved for the permanent identification of sheep and farmed goats:

**NLIS Sheep Breeder Tags** – these tags are color coded for year of birth. This type of tag can only be used to identify sheep and goats that are still on their property of birth. The color for year of birth is not mandatory, but strongly recommended.

The recommended color scheme is:

Tag colour		Year of birth
<b>NLIS Sheep Breeder Tags</b>		
Yellow		2005
Red		2006
Sky blue		2007
Black		2008
White		2009
Orange		2010
Light green		2011
Purple		2012

**NLIS Sheep Post-breeder Tags** – these tags are always pink and are used to identify sheep and goats no longer on the property on which they were born or introduced animals that have lost their original NLIS Sheep Breeder Tag. They can also be used on sheep that are born on the property.

<b>NLIS Sheep Post-breeder Tags</b>	
Pink	

NLIS (Sheep) tags can be attached to either the right or left ear, although trials indicate that fewer tags are lost at shearing when placed in the left ear.

Producers may also add other information such as serial numbers or property names to the tag depending on their size and style.

Victorian producers now have the opportunity to purchase **electronic tags** for use as part of the NLIS (Sheep & Goats) through the Department of Primary Industries (DPI). The use of electronic sheep tags is voluntary. **For further information about electronic NLIS sheep tags, please refer to the DPI publication “Your Guide to the use of Electronic Tags as part of the NLIS (Sheep & Goats)”.**

### Identification of sheep vaccinated against OJD

When producers vaccinate sheep against OJD, they must be identified with a NLIS (Sheep) tag. A capital ‘V’ in a circle must be printed on the opposite side of the tag to the PIC. Additional information such as serial numbers, stud name or property name may also be printed on this side of the tag.



Figure 2. A capital ‘V’ in a circle on an NLIS (Sheep) ear tag means vaccinated against OJD

### Identification of terminal lambs from OJD affected flocks

Store terminal (crossbred) lambs from OJD affected flocks can be sold for finishing on another property, provided they have an ABC score of at least one or they are identified with a NLIS (Sheep) tag with a capital ‘T’ in a circle on the opposite side of the NLIS sheep tag to the PIC. These lambs must also be sold with an accompanying Sheep Health Statement (SHS).

‘T’ tag lambs are suitable for finishing but should be sold for slaughter prior to cutting their first two permanent incisor teeth. If they are slaughtered prior to reaching this age they are considered to be low risk of spreading OJD onto the property.



Figure 3. A capital ‘T’ in a circle on an NLIS (Sheep) ear tag indicates they are terminal lambs from an OJD affected flock.

### Ordering NLIS Sheep tags

To obtain visual NLIS Sheep tags, producers should contact their local rural merchandise outlet. There are currently several companies who have been approved to manufacture NLIS Sheep and Goat tags. These tags cannot be ordered through DPI. To order electronic NLIS (Sheep) tags please visit [www.dpi.vic.gov.au/nlis](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au/nlis) and follow the links to order sheep & Goat tags online.

### Further information

Further information about sheep identification can be obtained from animal health staff at your nearest DPI office, by calling the DPI’s toll-free helpline on 1800 678 779 or on the DPI web site: [www.dpi.vic.gov.au](http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au)

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