

Notice for Cattle Producers: Questions and Answers

Beginning November 5, 2024, there will be only one USDA-official tag type approved for cattle. [USDA's final rule](#) for cattle ID requires all official tags applied to cattle after November 5, 2024 to be both RFID and visually readable. Vermont will no longer be supplying silver metal National Uniform Eartagging System (NUES or 'brite') tags for use in cattle.

What does this mean for you as a producer?

If you apply eartags as official identification to cattle, you need to use RFID tags starting November 5, 2024. Cattle born in the USA will need 840 eartags.

What are RFID tags?

RFID tags are electronic identification tags that can be scanned from a distance, as well as read visually. They come in several different shapes, all of which are RFID capable. They all have 15-digit identification numbers, which are printed on them and may also be read electronically. RFID tags may also have a bangle with a shorter management number on them. Limited supplies are available from The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets for free (the white and orange button type seen below) or they can be privately ordered, customized, and purchased through approved tag manufacturers (the yellow type seen below).



Do all cattle need official eartags?

It remains Vermont state law that all cattle leaving the farm of origin for any reason require official ID. The new USDA final rule changes which eartags that are considered official.

Some examples of cattle that currently require official identification: cattle going to a livestock dealer or through a market, cattle moving out of state on a CVI, cattle coming to your Vermont farm, all animals traveling to a Vermont fair. Please note that this includes all young calves that arrive at markets for sale as feeders (which currently are receiving little metal tags at markets).

What about cattle that already have a NUES or other official eartag?

All cattle (including dairy, beef, heifers, and steers) that already have a NUES tag or another grandfathered form of official ID in their ear by November 5, 2024, will be considered officially tagged for life. These cattle will not require an RFID-capable 840 tag applied. You can choose to add an 840 RFID tag to them, but it is not required. Grandfathered tags (i.e. – 12-digit F.A.I.R. tags, truncated AIN tags, tags starting with 982- or 985-) applied before March 11, 2015, will also continue to be considered official ID for the animals that have them.

The aforementioned tags applied after March 11, 2015, and any NUES tags applied after November 5, 2024, will not be considered official identification.

What if I choose to sell cattle without official eartags as slaughter-only animals?

Not putting an official identification on these animals restricts who can buy them.

At auction, or off the farm, these animals must be sold to a slaughter facility per state and federal requirements. The slaughter-only tag will be applied to the animals as identification to allow traceback.

What should you do with your old silver metal or white plastic NUES tags or non-RFID 15-digit tags that are no longer official in cattle if applied after November 5, 2024?

You can return those tags to the Agency. You can continue to use them as official tags in swine, although the Agency recommends using 840 RFID tags in swine as well as cattle.



How do I tell if my 840 tags are RFID capable?

Visual-only 840 tags can look very similar to tags that have an RFID capability. The images below show an RFID tag on the left and a non-RFID on the right. If you cannot tell whether your tags are RFID capable, ask your veterinarian to test them with a reader.



How do I get 840 RFID tags?

Producers will be able to request limited numbers of free 840 tags from the Agency for as long as we have supplies in stock. This supply will be limited by premises, and will be dependent on our current supply and your anticipated annual usage.

Producers should reach out to the suppliers of 840 tags to order sufficient tags to cover their needs. You will be responsible for ordering these directly from a supplier. USDA lists all manufacturers online. Visit vsapps.aphis.usda.gov/aims/AllProductNew.do, choose “Program Approved,” and “Cattle” as the species to see a comprehensive list of manufacturers. Only RFID capable devices will be approved starting November 5, 2024.

Can I cut out a NUES or other official tag that was grandfathered in?

No. Vermont State law (Title 6 § 1476) prohibits removal of official ear tags or other identification without authorization by the Secretary of the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets.

What about brucellosis tags for cattle?

Orange metal NUES tags, as seen below, are the approved Brucellosis tags per USDA. However, these will not be considered official ID if applied after November 5, 2024.



Can I still order NUES tags for my market?

No. We will no longer carry these tags. They cannot be independently printed.

Can state metal tags still be used in pigs?

Yes.

Can backtags still be used?

Yes, backtags can still be used, but only on cattle that are going direct to an inspected slaughter facility. All other cattle that need official identification must be identified with an 840 RFID tag.

What about the large bulls that go to slaughter?

They can go direct to slaughter on a USDA backtag.

Is the State also notifying dealers and veterinarians that they will need to use 840 RFID tags as of November 5, 2024?

The State is conducting outreach to stakeholders through multiple platforms. Please feel free to give our outreach information to any producers that have questions.

Where can I go to learn more about official identification types for cattle?

If you would like more information about the rule change or to acquire RFID at no cost, please contact the Animal Health office at (802) 828-2421.