

Pigs: branding and PigPass NVD

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This Factsheet provides a brief overview of the requirements for NLIS Pork, especially the importance of correct pig branding and movement documents.

Introduction

Under the NSW Stock Diseases Regulation 2009, pigs of 25 kg live weight or above must be identified with a swine brand for the property from which they are being consigned if they are being sent to a saleyard, an abattoir or another property for sale.

In addition, information about pigs and their property of origin must be provided in an approved form of movement document whenever pigs are moved to a saleyard, abattoir or to another property for any purpose.

Why brand?

Proper branding is required for identification and traceback of stock to the property of disease origin in the event of an emergency disease response or where chemical residues were detected in slaughter pigs.

To maintain public confidence and the reputation of pig meats, rapid identification and traceback is essential.

Governments aim to protect human health, and consumers are demanding that purchased food be safe and free from contamination. The National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) for Pork is essential for swift traceback and to maintain product integrity.

Under the Australian Pork Industry Quality program (APIQ), accredited members must identify slaughter pigs in accordance with state legislation.

The abattoir relies on the brands to identify carcases. If the brand is not legible, it slows

identification and processing, which may result in incorrect payments

Obtaining a brand

A pig brand is a 6 digit number derived from the property identification code (PIC). Both are assigned by the District Registrar of the Livestock Health and Pest Authority (LHPA).

Pig owners may apply to their local LHPA for a brand, and a PIC if their property doesn't already have one. The LHPA can also advise where to purchase tattoo equipment.

If you don't have a brand, there are provisions for special or crown brands to be applied by officers of the LHPA. Arrangements can also be made for the slaughter of pigs for private consumption and use. Please contact your local LHPA for details.

Branding guidelines

To ensure clear, legible branding of pigs:

- Never use another owner's brand.
- ☐ Ensure the brand is maintained in good operating condition; that is, the brand is clean and needles are sharp and straight and not clogged with old ink or hair.
- ☐ Use carbon-based branding ink or paste so the brand will still be readable after the pig is slaughtered and dehaired. Do not use boot polish, stock sprays or bale stencilling ink.
- ☐ Press the tattoo into an ink-impregnated pad to ensure needles are covered with ink.
- □ Strike the tattoo flat onto the pigs shoulder with enough force for skin penetration of all needles. Never strike the pig over the backbone.
- ☐ Re-ink the tattoo before branding each pig.

- ☐ If pigs are excessively dirty, wash the shoulder area before tattooing.
- ☐ Replace brands that are worn, broken or have damaged needles.
- ☐ Brand pigs on one or both shoulders within 7 days before leaving the property.

Remember that penalties can be applied for unbranded pigs or where the brand is not readable. Also, buyers may discriminate against pigs if brands are not easily read by abattoir staff or meat inspectors. It pays to have pigs well branded.

Movement documents

Pig producers must complete a movement document whenever pigs are moved to a saleyard, abattoir or to another property for any purpose, even if ownership of the pigs doesn't change. The document must be provided to the buyer or person receiving the pigs and copies kept by all parties.

Movement documents provide a history of the movements of mobs of pigs long after the pigs (and their brands) have been moved elsewhere or slaughtered. This is important for disease tracing and export market access.

There are two approved forms of movement document: PigPass National Vendor Declaration (NVD), and transported stock statement (TSS).

PigPass is issued by Australia Pork Limited (APL) and is the only approved form that meets the requirements of both the NLIS and the APIQ program run by APL. Producers can obtain PigPass from APL at http://www.pigpass.com.au or by phoning 1800 001 458.

A TSS meets NLIS requirements if stock and PIC details are specified. A TSS does not meet APIQ standards or provide information required by processors about conformance with food safety standards. TSS can be obtained from LHPAs.

A producer who is already registered under the PigPass system can obtain an emergency PigPass from APL or a participating stock agent if you have run out of blank forms and need a copy urgently. Some LHPAs may provide an emergency PigPass to producers who are not registered with the PigPass system.

Penalties

Under the Stock Diseases Regulation 2009, maximum penalties of up to \$11,000 can be applied if a person fails to properly brand pigs or to provide a correctly completed movement document.

In addition, meat inspectors at abattoirs may prevent slaughter or processing of any pigs which are not branded or are branded illegibly, or which are not accompanied by a completed movement document. Some abattoirs might only accept PigPass.

It is an offence for an agent to sell pigs that are not branded, or for any person to buy pigs without a brand. The owner of any pigs at a saleyard which are not correctly branded is guilty of an offence.

Not providing a PigPass or TSS is also an offence. The form must accompany all pigs when they are moved to any other property. An agent must only sell pigs if they are accompanied by a PigPass or TSS.

Agents and abattoir operators must keep a record of the PigPass or TSS for two years. Producers, including vendors and purchasers, must keep these documents for seven years.

Acknowledgement

This Factsheet is based on an earlier NSW Department of Primary Industries' Primefact entitled 'Pig Branding in NSW' by Greg Roese and Graeme Taylor, former Livestock Officers, Pigs, and Peter Daley, former Senior Regulatory Inspector, all based at Tamworth.

Further information

For more information, please contact your local Livestock Health and Pest Authority or NSW Department of Industry and Investment, Livestock Officers Pigs.

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