

NLIS Sheep and Goats: Guidelines for NSW Abattoirs



*Sheep abattoir.
Photo: Department of Primary Industries Image Gallery.*

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Disclaimer

The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (November 2011). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information on which they rely is up to date and to check the currency of the information with the appropriate officer of the Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent advisor.

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Foreword

This publication provides guidelines to abattoir operators about complying with the requirements for the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) whenever sheep and goats are slaughtered in NSW. These requirements are prescribed under the *Stock Diseases Regulation 2009*.

In summary:

- all sheep and goats must have an NLIS visual tag before they are slaughtered;
- all sheep and goats must be accompanied by a completed NVD or TSS, which lists all of the tag PICs in the consignment, before they are slaughtered;
- kill data must be uploaded to the NLIS database by the next working day.

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1. Tags

All sheep and goats that are being consigned to an abattoir must be identified with an approved NLIS visual ear tag. The use of the correct year of birth colour is strongly recommended. Feral goats are exempt from tags if consigned directly from the property of capture or via a depot to an abattoir for slaughter. Dairy goats are not exempt if sent to an abattoir.

The **vendor** should check all sheep or goats before they are loaded and:

- replace any missing tags with either a breeder (year of birth colour) tag if born on that property, or a post-breeder (pink) tag for that property if the stock was born elsewhere or their origin or age is uncertain;
and
- write on the NVD, under 'PICs on ear tags/brands', **all** other PICs on tags that differ from the pre-printed PIC on the NVD (this includes purchased sheep and sheep bred by the vendor on a different property);
or
- attach a pink post-breeder tag (with the PIC of the property the stock are being consigned from) to all the sheep, and write that PIC (which is the same as the pre-printed PIC) under 'PICs on ear tags/brands' on the NVD to indicate that post-breeder tags have been used.

The **abattoir operator** should sight the stock as they are being unloaded or penned at the abattoir. Arrangements must be made to ensure that any sheep with missing tags remain linked to the consignment PIC and NVD throughout slaughter. Special (abattoir or emergency) tags may be obtained from the Livestock Health and Pest Authority (LHPA) and attached to untagged sheep before slaughter. A vendor's property tags cannot be attached in abattoir lairages except with the prior approval of an inspector. Consignments with many untagged sheep should be reported to an LHPA inspector.

It is an offence for any person to send, deliver, sell, buy or slaughter untagged sheep. However, an abattoir may slaughter such stock for humane reasons on the direction of a stock inspector, NSW Food Authority or AQIS officer, animal welfare inspector or veterinary practitioner.

2. Vendor declarations

All sheep and goat movements must be accompanied by either a national vendor declaration and waybill (NVD) or a transported stock statement (TSS). The NVD is preferable as it provides for all of the information required for tracing, stock transportation and product integrity.

The **vendor** must provide the following information on the NVD or TSS.

- Property identification code (PIC) of the property where the journey commenced. This is pre-printed on the NVD. If the stock have been on agistment, the vendor must obtain an NVD with that property's PIC from the property owner.
- Number and description (year born, breed, sex, type) of the sheep.
- All other PICs on tags attached to the sheep. This includes purchased sheep and sheep bred by the vendor but born on a different property. These PICs are written under 'PICs on ear tags/brands'. If there are more than five other PICs, a list should be attached to the NVD and the most common four PICs, together with the words 'see attached list' or similar, should be written on the NVD.
- Whether the stock are vendor bred (question 3). If the answer is 'No', then the other tag PICs must be written on the NVD as above.
- Date of movement

The rest of the NVD must also be completed to meet stock transportation, livestock production assurance (LPA) and product integrity requirements.

The **abattoir operator** should confirm that a completed NVD (or post sale summary with all required information including other tag PICs) has been provided.

- If not, the sheep should be held in lairage until a completed document is provided by the vendor or stock agent.
- If the answer to question 3 is 'No', other PICs should have been written under 'PICs on ear tags / brands'. If not, the abattoir should contact the vendor (for director consignments) and make arrangements to have the other tag PICs recorded, or check the sheep and record the other PICs observed on tags ('foreign PICs').

It is an offence for the vendor not to provide this information, and for an abattoir to slaughter stock if they don't have this information. However, an abattoir may slaughter such stock for humane reasons as outlined above.

3. Holding paddocks

Sheep and goats may be held in holding paddocks before being transferred to abattoir lairages for slaughter. Holding paddocks may be nearby (adjacent to or within walking distance of the abattoir) or remote (such that the stock have to be trucked to the abattoir). Remote holding paddocks must have their own PIC.

Stock consigned from a saleyard to an abattoir for immediate slaughter, or to nearby holding paddocks for slaughter within 7 days, must be transferred by the saleyard to the abattoir PIC. The abattoir uploads the mob-based kill as a **saleyard consignment**.

Stock consigned from a saleyard to holding paddocks that are remote, or which are not destined for slaughter within 7 days, must be transferred by the saleyard to the holding paddock PIC. If the holding paddock PIC is linked to the abattoir's NLIS database, the abattoir may upload the mob-based kill as a **saleyard consignment** using the holding paddock PIC as the processor PIC. Otherwise, the sheep must be uploaded as a **direct consignment** from the holding paddock PIC.

Stock consigned directly from a property to an abattoir for immediate slaughter or to nearby holding paddocks for slaughter within 7 days must be uploaded by the abattoir as a **direct consignment**. If the holding paddocks are not nearby or slaughter occurs after 7 days, the sheep must first be transferred by the abattoir operator to the holding paddock PIC and subsequently uploaded by the abattoir as a **direct consignment** from the holding paddock.

Details about saleyard and direct consignment uploads are provided in the next section.

4. NLIS database uploads

The key feature of the NLIS is the ability to rapidly trace sheep and goats through the NLIS database. To achieve this outcome, prescribed data must be uploaded soon after slaughter.

Who

Uploading kill data is the responsibility of the abattoir operator.

The abattoir must have a 'Processor' NLIS database account linked to the abattoir and holding paddock PICs (assigned by the LHPA). An account can be opened through www.nlis.mla.com.au or by contacting NLIS Ltd on 1800 654 743.

When

Key information must be uploaded to the NLIS database on the day of kill or the next working day. 'Working day' refers to normal business days, ie Monday to Friday except public holidays; for example, a Friday kill may be uploaded the next Monday.

How

The data may be recorded and uploaded in one of three ways:

- Entering the data into a spreadsheet which is uploaded to the NLIS database. This is the best option for larger abattoirs. Separate spreadsheets must be uploaded for saleyard and direct consignments. Details on this option are available in the Tech Tip *Sheep and goats mob-based kill upload* available from the 'Help' button or 'Help tools' tab on an abattoir NLIS database account.
- Typing in the details on-line. This may be easiest option for smaller abattoirs. Details are available in the same Tech Tip.
- Using commercial software, if available. Please discuss this option with your software and IT providers. NLIS interface specifications are available from www.mla.com.au/Meat-safety-and-traceability/Livestock-identification/NLIS-database or by contacting NLIS Ltd.

What

The following data must be uploaded for **saleyard consignments**:

- Species (sheep or goats)
- Processor PIC
- Date of kill
- Number of head in the mob killed
- Saleyard PIC

The following data must be uploaded for **direct consignments**:

- Species (sheep or goats)
- Processor PIC
- Date of kill
- Number of head in the mob killed
- Vendor's PIC (From PIC)
 - If the vendor doesn't have a PIC, the district code may be used with LHPA approval, provided the vendor's name and address are recorded in the abattoir's records. Use of district codes is discouraged and vendors should be advised to contact the LHPA to obtain a PIC next time.
- NVD serial number
- Whether the stock are vendor bred (and how long owned if 'No').
 - Although this field is not currently mandatory on the NLIS database, it is required by legislation and must be entered.
- Other PICs listed on the NVD.
 - Although this field is not currently mandatory on the NLIS database, it is required by legislation and any other PICs written on the NVD must be entered.

The following information is **optional** for all consignments:

- Foreign PICs. These are PICs found on tags attached to sheep which have not been written on the NVD. This information is useful for tracing and product integrity purposes and also for compliance monitoring as it identifies NVDs on which not all tag PICs have been recorded.
- NVD image. This provides additional tracing information such as the age of the sheep and the carrier's phone number, and fulfils the abattoir's obligation to keep copies of all NVDs. However, NVD images can only be uploaded when the data is entered on line.

5. Records

The **vendor or selling agent** must provide a copy of the NVD to the abattoir before or when the sheep or goats are delivered to the abattoir. The copies must include any attached list of other PICs. A post-sale summary (PSS) may be provided instead of the NVD *provided* other PICs are listed on the PSS.

The **abattoir operator** must keep a copy of the NVD for at least 2 years. This requirement is met if an image of the NVD is uploaded to the NLIS database.

6. Compliance and performance monitoring

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) regularly monitors the performance of sheep abattoirs from the NLIS database and provides a report to each abattoir, the NSW Food Authority, AQIS and relevant DPI staff and management. Pooled data is also provided to state and national NLIS committees to monitor the overall performance of the NLIS.

The monitoring data assesses how well vendors, saleyards and abattoirs are complying with the requirements of the NLIS and whether the system at each abattoir is continuously improving. On a State-wide basis, it provides an overall measure of traceability and whether the NLIS as a whole is working.

The following sections describe the key performance parameters, how to interpret the data, and corrective action that should be taken to continuously improve performance.

Overall score and rank

These figures provide an overall estimate of how well all stakeholders in the marketing chain to each abattoir, namely vendors, agents, buyers and abattoir operators, are complying with the NLIS and the Regulation and providing data that allows effective tracing.

The percentage figure is an average of the four performance measures detailed below, namely 'Uploads within 7 days', 'Required NVD data', 'Traceable PIC status' and 'Saleyard consignment disparity'. Over 98% is achievable. Over 95% is acceptable at this stage of implementation of the NLIS for sheep and goats but needs improvement. Under 90% means that the system is failing, the Regulation is not being complied with, and prompt corrective action is essential.

The rank lists each abattoir out of the 15 or so active sheep abattoirs in NSW. The lower the figure (1 = 1st) the better.

Kill days

This is the total number of days for which kill data was uploaded during the monitoring period.

This figure should be compared with actual operating days. For example, if the abattoir operates 5 days a week, with 1 day off for maintenance each month and no public holidays, then there should be 62 kills days each quarter. A lower 'kill days' figure suggests that some kills days were not uploaded. This is for guidance only and is not included in the overall measure of performance.

Sheep and mobs uploaded

This is the total number of sheep and mobs uploaded as direct and saleyard consignments during the monitoring period.

This figure should be compared with actual kill data. A lower number suggests that some sheep were not uploaded to the NLIS database.

Uploads within 7 days

This is a measure of timeliness of uploads. The Regulation requires kill data to be uploaded by the close of business on the next working day after slaughter, however routine monitoring is based on 7 days to allow for weekends, public holidays and other non-operating days.

This figure should always be 100%. A lower figure suggests that one or more uploads have been very late.

Required NVD data

This is a measure of whether all of the required data from NVDs has been uploaded for direct consignments. It is a combination of the following parameters: [Vendor bred or NVD image] + [Non-vendor bred with other PICs or foreign PICs or NVD image] – [Invalid NVD serial numbers].

A low figure (<80%) suggests that most or all of the data are not being provided or uploaded. Incomplete NVDs is one of areas of the mob-based system that needs further improvement.

Traceable PIC status

This measures whether the status of all property PICs provides good traceability for direct consignments. It is a combination of the following parameters: [Active + Inactive From PICs] + [District codes / 2] + [Agent codes / 2].

The PIC status performance measure should be 99.5% or higher. A lower figure may be due to:

- Using district codes or agent codes. Although these codes are allowable, they compromise traceability and their use should be discouraged, hence their value as a performance measure of the tracing system is discounted 50%.
- Using disbanded (cancelled) PICs, blocked PICs or 8As which are unlawful and negate traceability.

Saleyard consignment disparity

This is the difference between sheep transferred by saleyards to the abattoir PIC, and saleyard-consigned sheep uploaded by the abattoir as killed.

- A positive number means more sheep have been uploaded by the abattoir than were transferred by saleyards, resulting in a performance score of 100%. This may be because sheep are being transferred to a holding paddock PIC but then uploaded as saleyard kill consignments, or a saleyard has transferred sheep to the wrong abattoir PIC (perhaps because the buyer has provided an incorrect PIC).
- A negative number means more sheep have been transferred by saleyards than have been uploaded by the abattoir as killed, resulting in a performance score below 100%. This may be because the abattoir has not uploaded all sheep killed, or has uploaded saleyard consignments as direct consignments, or a saleyard has transferred sheep to the wrong abattoir PIC (perhaps because the buyer has provided an incorrect PIC).

Limitations

Monitoring reports from the NLIS database do not take into account:

- Number of sheep actually killed;
- Number of sheep tagged;

- Whether all PICs on tags have been written on the NVD;
- Whether direct consignment PICs are for the correct properties.

7. Further information

Using the NLIS database:

- Help tools on your NLIS database account
- NLIS Ltd, phone 1800 654 743, email: nlissupport@mla.com.au
- Your software and IT providers

NLIS rules, PICs, special tags:

- Livestock Health and Pest Authority

Compliance and monitoring:

- Department of Primary Industries, phone 02 6391 3511, email enquiries.nlis@industry.nsw.gov.au
- Legislation: www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/livestock/nlis/policy

NLIS Sheep – Vendor’s Checklist

PIC: **Date:** **NVD number:**

Before consignment:

- Obtain an NVD with the pre-printed PIC for the property the sheep are being consigned from.
- Check all sheep shortly before or at loading.
- Replace any missing tags with either a breeder tag (preferably with the correct year of birth colour) or a pink post-breeder tag with the PIC for that property.
- If any sheep were purchased or born on a different property, write all PICs on tags attached to those sheep on the NVD under ‘PICs on ear tags / brands’
or
attach a pink post-breeder tag to all sheep and write that PIC on the NVD under ‘PICs on ear tags / brands’ to show that post-breeder tags have been used.
- Complete the rest of the NVD.
- Send the completed NVD with the sheep to the saleyard or abattoir.

NLIS Sheep – Buyer’s Checklist

PIC: **Date:** **NVD number:**

Before sale:

- Check that the sheep that you intend bidding on appear to all have tags and are accompanied by a completed NVD (including other tag PICs).
- Confirm that your account details are up to date and include the correct abattoir or holding paddock PICs.

After purchase:

- Provide the correct PIC for the abattoir or holding paddock to which the sheep are being delivered to the selling agent at the time of purchase.
- Obtain a copy of the NVD or post-sale summary after the sale and keep it somewhere where it can be readily found for at least 7 years.

NLIS Sheep – Abattoir Operator’s Checklist

Abattoir: **Date:**

Preparation:

- Open a ‘Processor’ NLIS database account.
- Obtain a copy of the Tech Tip *Sheep and goats mob-based kill upload*.
- Talk with your software and IT providers about data upload options.

Before slaughter:

- Remind each vendor of direct consignments of their obligations (see vendor’s checklist)
- Remind buyers on your behalf to only buy sheep that are tagged and that are accompanied by a completed NVD (including other tag PICs), and to provide the correct abattoir or holding paddock PIC (see buyer’s checklist)
- On delivery, sight all sheep for missing tags.
 - Replace lost tags with special tags, or implement other systems approved by the NSW Food Authority or AQIS that maintain the link between all sheep and carcasses with their PIC and NVD.
 - If many sheep in a consignment are untagged, advise the vendor that the sheep cannot be killed and report the incident to an LHPA inspector.
- Obtain a completed NVD from each vendor or selling agent.
 - If the answer to question 3 is ‘No’, confirm that other tag PICs have been written under ‘PICs on ear tags / brands’ on the NVD. If not, advise the vendor or agent and make alternative arrangements to record foreign PICs.

After slaughter:

- Enter and upload to the NLIS database the following information on the day of kill or the next business day:
 - Species (sheep or goats)
 - Abattoir PIC
 - Date of kill
 - Number of head killed

- Saleyard or vendor's PIC (From PIC)
- NVD serial number (direct consignments)
- Whether the stock are vendor bred (and how long owned if 'No') (direct consignments)
- Other PICs listed on the NVD or found on the sheep (direct consignments)
- Foreign PICs (optional)
- NVD image (optional)