

FACT SHEET

Tracing lost livestock after disasters

The NLIS (the National Livestock Identification System) is important for the identification and traceability of livestock, and reflects Australia's commitment to biosecurity and food safety, providing primary producers with a competitive edge in a global market.

But have you considered the role NLIS tags or rumen boluses can play in the recovery of stock in a natural disaster - or as proof of their existence for insurance or grant claims?

In recent floods The **Rural Recovery Support Service** found some primary producers struggled to prove how many head they had lost, because stock was not photographed, tagged and/or tag numbers weren't recorded.

This impeded their ability to access much-needed grant assistance for replacement or insurance claims as vets couldn't validate the loss.

That's why it is important to update the NLIS database regularly.

Replacing lost stock following an emergency is an expensive exercise, and any delays in doing so will affect your bottom line as a primary producer.

So ask yourself:

- **Do you only tag cattle just prior to sale and movement off-farm?**
- **Where are your NLIS tags right now?**
- **Are your breeders tagged?**
- **Are you keeping accurate records of the numbers on the tags in a safe place?**

Flood safe and fire ready

The NLIS Tagging System is a vital link in identifying your cattle in the event of a disaster, be it bushfire or flood or stock losses through theft.

The numbers on each tag are unique to your property and to each member of your herd individually.

On each tag, the first two letters and the next six numbers are your PIC, the unique identifying number of your property.

The next set of 3 letters and 5 numbers are individual to each beast.



Woodburn cattle farmer, Noel Thompson (above) knows first-hand the value of NLIS tags, after he lost multiple head downriver in the February 2022 Northern Rivers floods.

Miraculously one of his cows made it through the flood waters to Ballina, where she went out over the bar to sea and came back into shore on a beach 30 km further north.

She then gave birth to a healthy calf.

"The people who found her were honest people who were able to trace her ownership back to me via her NLIS tags," Noel Thompson said.

"If she hadn't been tagged, I would never have gotten her back".

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Doing the groundwork

Yarding your livestock regularly is an important activity in your animal husbandry calendar.

And tagging within the first month of birth is good management practice, as is retagging stock which have lost tags, as soon as you notice.

Important Reminder

If you buy livestock from online sites (such as Auctions Plus) ensure the movement of the cattle to your property is recorded in the NLIS database.

Keeping Records

In a disaster or emergency, you might have to leave your stock to fend for themselves.

But if you create a Herd Book of vital information and keep it in a handy place so you can take it with you, this will go a long way towards establishing your stock losses, should you need to.



Keep information such as:

- PIC details
- Tag numbers in the sequence purchased
- Any receipts as proof of purchase
- Copies of any on/off documentation such as National Vendor Declarations (NVDs) and make sure that the description of the cattle on your NVD has as much information as possible.

As part of your disaster preparedness, do you need to review your tagging practices?

Using Photos

Photos taken with your mobile phone of each herd member is a quick way to record your stock during yarding.

Save the photos of each animal as their tag numbers.

If they are young animals, photograph them later again as adults and re-record the tag numbers against the new photos.

When photographing stock, capture unique identifying markings, or anything else which can assist you identify them if needed.

Image: livestock tag



This Fact Sheet has been compiled by
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