Sheep and Goat eID
Frequently Asked Questions

NSW is currently transitioning to mandatory individual electronic identification for sheep and goats. Using eIDs for sheep and goats will ensure more accurate and timely traceability to help manage and recover from any emergency animal disease or residue incident.

About eID

What is an eID?

An eID is an electronic identification device that has an internal microchip and is printed with a unique serial number, which is attached to individual sheep and farmed goats generally in the form of an ear tag, or leg band for some goats. The eID can be scanned and the individual electronic data is uploaded to the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) database. The NLIS is Australia's system for the identification and traceability of cattle, pigs, sheep and goats.

Why is eID being implemented?

NLIS (Sheep and Goats) as a mob-based system was fully implemented in mid-2010. The NLIS has matured, and our markets are more stringent in their traceability requirements. Hence the need to introduce a more accurate and efficient traceability system for sheep and goats.

The introduction of eID will:

- Provide more accurate and timely traceability of animals

- Reduce time delays to manage an emergency disease or residue incident

- Reduce the number of animals and producers impacted (including animals destroyed) in response to an emergency disease

- Reduce the time that Australia is restricted from export markets following an emergency disease or residue incident

Why is mandatory eID being implemented now?

Increased movement of people and goods is contributing to increased biosecurity risks. Recent detections of foot-and-mouth disease and lumpy skin disease in Indonesia have further raised concerns.

Additionally, traceability is becoming increasingly important to key customers in export markets, particularly if their domestic traceability requirements are high. As a result, our international

competitors are enhancing their traceability systems. To stay competitive in these markets, both industry and government at state and national levels agreed in 2022 to transition to eID for sheep and goats.

Why can't eID be introduced on a voluntary basis?

The key reason for introducing eID is to improve traceability of individual animals and their cohorts in the event of an emergency disease incursion. If eID is introduced on a voluntary basis, then the ability to undertake accurate and timely traceability will be negatively affected by those producers who are still using a visual tag under a mob-based system. Running two traceability systems in parallel is inefficient, more complex and costly, and less accurate.

This would mean that delays in tracing animals negatively impact the whole sheep and goat sector, leading to disease spread, more animals and producers impacted and more time out of our key export markets.

Where else has eID technology been implemented?

- eID was first implemented for sheep in Europe in 2001 after a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in the UK.
- eID was implemented for cattle in New South Wales in 2004.
- eID was implemented for sheep and goats in Victoria in 2017.

The technology has proven to be effective and will continue to be a long-term biosecurity tool for industry and government.

How are the sheep and goat industries involved in the transition to eID?

A Traceability Reference group has been formed to ensure a joint collaborative process between government and industry to implement eID in NSW.

The NSW Sheep and Goat Traceability Reference Group includes members from organisations representing producers, transporters, agents, saleyards, processors, as well as Local Land Services, the Rural Crime Squad and NSW Department of Primary Industries.

At a national level, the Australian Government has established an industry-government Sheep and Goat Traceability Task Force, which is focused on national issues such as harmonisation between states and territories to ensure the NLIS database and eID systems are compatible.

Why is ultra-high frequency eID not being implemented?

NSW approves for use eID devices which are NLIS accredited. Currently there are no UHF livestock devices either NLIS accredited or in the NLIS accreditation process that can be used on sheep and goats. Readers and other eID infrastructure would also need to be upgraded to make it possible to read the electronic information in a UHF device. The additional time and resources that would be required to trial, acquire and upgrade the entire supply chain to install UHF supplies currently means that the existing eID equipment is the only viable option for our national implementation timeline for the foreseeable future.

What happens if better technology comms along?

The implementation of eID across Australia will be technology agnostic, meaning it will work across different platforms and software systems, allowing for adoption of any improvements in eID traceability technology, as long as minimum standards are met. This ensures flexibility and adaptability for future advancements in the eID system.

Will the NLIS database be upgraded as part of eID implementation?

The Commonwealth Government has announced $26 million for an upgrade of the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) database.

Integrity Systems Company will use this investment to develop a new database that has improved functionality, user-friendliness, analytics, reporting and cybersecurity. The new database will be developed independently to avoid impacting the functionality of the current database.

Why can't there be an option for vendor-bred sheep and farmed goats sold direct to slaughter without eID?

Creating a tag-free pathway for direct-to-slaughter movements would have serious traceability implications for a significant proportion of sheep and farmed goats. There is no precedent in the NLIS Standards for Cattle, Pigs or current NLIS (Sheep and Goats) Standards for livestock going direct to slaughter to be identified differently.

To maintain traceability integrity, sheep and farmed goats would still need to be identified with an NLIS visual tag, which means the mob-based and individual eID systems would need to be run as parallel systems, which increases cost, complexity and reduces accuracy of NLIS data.

eID offers increased market opportunities as it increases market confidence in identification and traceability integrity and allows the sale of sheep and farmed goats to any vendor, not limiting sales to processors.

Cost

How much is implementing sheep and goat eID's going to cost me?

Implementing eID will have a cost impact on all sheep and goat supply chain segments.

Many factors will determine the exact cost to you of implementing sheep and goat eID in your operation. These can include what segment of the supply chain you are in (e.g. processing, saleyard, producer, agent, event operator), the size of your operation, whether you buy in or breed sheep or goats, how you buy in sheep or goats, and whether you transfer sheep between PICs.

Depending on your industry sector, you may be eligible for the NSW Sheep and Goat eID Infrastructure Rebate Scheme to assist with some of the costs of implementing sheep and Goat eID. The detail on what each sector is eligible to apply for is outlined in the Guidelines on the RAA website https://www.raa.nsw.gov.au/grants/eid.

What Government assistance will be provided to offset the costs to implement eID?

$38 million has been allocated by the NSW Government to support the sheep and goat industry transition to implement eID. This includes the $7.2 million Australian Government contribution.

Eligible saleyards, processors, primary producers and stock and station agents in NSW can apply for a rebate on the purchase and installation of eID systems and equipment.

Applications for the NSW Sheep and Goat eID Infrastructure Rebate Scheme open on

- 1 August for saleyards and processors.
- 3 October for producers and stock and station agents.

Information about the rebate, including program guidelines and FAQs are available on the RAA website: www.raa.nsw.gov.au/grants/eid.

Can I get a discount on tags?

There is currently no government supported discount on tags in NSW.

The NSW Sheep and Goat eID Infrastructure Rebate Scheme is designed to support infrastructure purchases and installation only, not ongoing expenses. eIDs are ineligible for the rebate.

The NSW Government supports a national tag tender/ procurement approach to reducing the cost of eIDs for sheep and farmed goat producers as the most sustainable solution for the industry and is currently supporting investigations into this approach.

Traceability and disease incursions

What happens if there is a foot-and-mouth disease outbreak?

Livestock movements will be stopped until the extent of the outbreak is determined by state and commonwealth governments, and initial livestock tracing and planning is complete. NSW DPI and primary industries departments in other states have staged practise sessions and planned extensively for these scenarios.

Australia will be banned from our export markets the day that foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) is detected. These delays would likely be long and will continue until Australia can prove freedom from FMD. The UK was banned from its export markets for a total of 7 years after its 2001 FMD outbreak.

The details regarding Australia's response to FMD is outlined in AUSVETPLAN (https://animalhealthaustralia.com.au/ausvetplan).

If FMD is detected, government authorities will seek to rapidly diagnose, trace and destroy infected and susceptible animals as soon as possible in an effort to prevent further disease spread, and to ultimately eradicate the disease.

Without sheep and goat eID in place, traceback delays will lead to further disease spread, more animals that need to be destroyed and more producers impacted.

What is the risk of a significant livestock disease outbreak in Australia?

With the global rise in the movement of people and products, the risk of a major livestock disease incursion in Australia has increased over time. The current estimate is that Australia faces a 56% probability of a significant animal disease incursion within the next five years. These diseases include Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), Lumpy Skin Disease, African Swine Fever, Avian Influenza, and African Horse Sickness.

What is the benefit of having mandatory sheep and goat eID in NSW if there is a disease outbreak?

The recent 2020 SAFEMEAT Traceability Evaluation Exercise reported that within 24 hours, 70% of sheep slaughtered using visual tags were traceable back to the vendor or property of residence for the last 30 days, compared to almost 100% of sheep with eIDs accurately traced back to vendor or property of residence within the same time period.

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Whilst eID does not prevent an exotic disease or residue incident, eID enables more accurate and timely traceability of animals, and their cohorts. This is critical for managing disease outbreaks swiftly, and reducing the time Australia faces export market bans.

For example, the UK foot-and-mouth outbreak in 2001 took seven weeks to trace animals due to the absence of eID. The disease spread, which resulted in a seven-year export market ban. The implementation of eID in Victoria demonstrated that traceback can now take minutes instead of days.

How will mandatory sheep and goat eID benefit export markets?

An FMD outbreak would likely result in an export market ban on Australia's sheep meat, wool, and goat meat (along with beef and pork). As a large part of the sheep and goat sector depends on exports (66% of sheep meat, 98% of wool production, and 95% of goat production), the impact would be substantial.

With eIDs in place for sheep and goats, tracing would be faster, enabling a quicker response and eradication of a disease. This would lead to a faster recovery from export bans, reducing the financial impact on the sheep and goat supply chain.

Why should we implement eID if feral animals can spread emergency animal diseases including FMD?

Both livestock traceability and feral animal management can contribute to the management of animal disease transmission.

Feral pigs, deer and other vertebrate pests are routinely and strategically managed to reduce their economic, environmental and social impacts. This helps manage the transmission of existing endemic diseases to domestic stock.

A targeted reduction in feral animal numbers in a specified area has been shown to break disease transmission cycles. In NSW we are testing our ability to help eradicate an emergency animal disease by rapidly reducing high numbers of targeted feral animals in specific areas, which might surround an exotic disease incursion point.

While feral animals may play a role in the transmission of some livestock diseases, transmission between livestock is likely to be the major immediate threat in the case of emergency animal diseases.

The most likely access point for FMD is via the illegal importation of FMD contaminated feedstuffs which could then be fed to domesticated pigs.

Given the larger numbers and closer geographic proximity of domesticated livestock, the potential for disease spread among these animals is considerably higher. Australia's priority is to establish an exceptionally effective and robust traceability system, consistently striving to enhance it, reduce vulnerabilities, and address weak points.

Control of feral animals during an exotic disease emergency is outlined in the AUSVETPLAN for wild animal response (https://animalhealthaustralia.com.au/ausvetplan).

Producers

How will implementing eID impact me as a producer?

For sheep and farmed goat producers, the only change required is using an NLIS eID instead of NLIS visual ID tags. You will need to continue to purchase NLIS devices and an applicator. Other

equipment may be required, depending on your property-to-property transfer activity and if you plan to collate individual animal data.

What eID equipment do I need for my property?

For many producers, the only change will be switching from a visual tag to an eID. Sheep and goat producers may not need to purchase tag reading equipment. However, access to a scanner will be necessary if you move stock between properties with different PICs, or onto your PIC.

Producers may want to purchase eID equipment to use individual animal data on health, fertility, genetics, weight gain and wool traits to make more informed management, monitoring and selection decisions. This individual commercial decision by producers may facilitate the ability to improve productivity and profitability.

What are the on-farm benefits from eID?

eID provides the ability for sheep producers to obtain individual animal data for such matters as health, fertility, genetics, weight gain and wool traits. Such data allows producers to make more informed management, monitoring and selection decisions thereby facilitating the ability to improve productivity and profitability.

The ability to trace animals more quickly via eID allows Government to reduce disease spread and to respond and manage exotic disease incidents more quickly. This reduces the risk to producers that their animals and revenue will be negatively impacted in the case of disease spread.

My animals never leave the farm, I slaughter on site. Do I need to tag them?

In this case no, they would not be required to be tagged. But they, or the sheep/goats they were bred from, should have been recorded as being present on your property in the NLIS database. The NSW Regulation requires that sheep must have a permanent identifier (in the form of an NLIS accredited device) before they leave or move from their property of birth or subsequent properties.

Sheep and farmed goats born from 1 January 2025 and all sheep and farmed goats from 1 January 2027 will need to have an eID prior to leaving the property of birth.

Once a sheep or goat is tagged, will I need to upload these tags into the National Livestock Identification System database and if so at what point?

Once you purchase NLIS accredited eIDs, they are individually registered to your PIC on the NLIS database.

When moving animals through saleyards or to slaughter at abattoirs, saleyard and abattoir operators are responsible for scanning and recording each animal's eID into the NLIS database. This includes data such as the eID's serial number, microchip number, the FROM PIC and PIC to where the animal has been transferred to.

However, recording of property to property (P2P) movements will require producers to scan each individual animal and upload their movement information into the NLIS. For more information visit: www.nlis.com.au.

Will there be changes to the current tag colour system?

No. NSW will continue to strongly recommend use of the year of birth colour system for eIDs, noting that post-breeder eIDs will always be pink.

Use of breeder tags which correspond to the nationally agreed colour for the year of birth is recommended and continues to be used by many producers. The colours are rotated through an eight-year cycle.

How can I learn what I need to do?

Targeted education, training and awareness workshops to help with the implementation of eID across the sheep and goat supply chain into the future will be made available for industry members. More information about workshops and online training will be provided as they become available.

What's the difference between a harvested rangeland goat and a farmed goat?

A harvested rangeland goat (HRG) is a goat that has been captured from a wild state. It has not been born through a managed breeding program and has not been subjected to any animal husbandry procedure or treatment. Such goats are eligible for a tag-free movement if they're transported from their property of capture directly to slaughter, or to slaughter via one registered goat depot.

A farmed goat means any breed or type of goat that is not a harvested rangeland goat.

How will mandatory eID impact me if I'm a harvested rangeland goat producer?

There is no change to what is currently required of harvested rangeland goat producers under current NLIS requirements. Harvested rangeland goats sent directly to an abattoir for slaughter, or via one registered goat depot, can be moved tag-free subject to meeting certain other accreditation requirements.

What about tag-free options for earless goats?

Current tag exemptions for dairy, miniature and earless goats will likely cease once the NLIS approved goat leg-band is made mandatory to use. In line with implementation timelines, all dairy goats as well as earless and miniature goats will need to be identified with an NLIS accredited eID or NLIS accredited leg band, before they leave their property of birth.

Saleyards

Victoria has smaller saleyards than NSW. Is it even possible to scan the larger numbers in NSW saleyards prior to sale?

Ballarat has scanned 60,000 sheep in one day on numerous occasions. By comparison, the largest ever sale in NSW was 80,000 at Wagga Wagga.

This demonstrates the feasibility of scanning substantial numbers at NSW saleyards. Manufacturers are also offering a five-way scanner for saleyards, and Victoria presently employs only three-way auto drafters/scanners.

Will saleyards be required to do the two types of transfers between when they are required to scan eID and when all sheep and farmed goats must have eIDs?

Yes. From 1 January 2025, until 1 January 2027, sheep and goats with eIDs and those with visual tags will require distinct handling at saleyards. During this period, there will be two types of uploads to the NLIS database:

- Mob-Based uploads - between January 2025 and January 2027, movements to and from saleyards for older sheep and farmed goats identified with visual tags will be uploaded on a mob-basis, by the saleyard office.
- Individual uploads – from January 2025 any sheep and farmed goats with eIDs will be individually scanned, and their eID data uploaded to the NLIS database, by the saleyard office.

This transitional arrangement ensures that both types of uploads are effectively managed during this period.

Processors

What do we do if sheep or goats are not tagged with eID after the cut-off date?

In NSW, all sheep and farmed goats born from 1 January 2025 must be fitted with an eID before leaving their property of birth. All sheep and farmed goats of any age must be fitted with an eID before leaving a property from 1 January 2027. If stock arrive at a processor non-compliant with this timeline:

- If there are a small number of stock in a consignment without an eID, an emergency eID can be fitted, and the vendor charged for the cost of the eID.
- If an entire consignment of stock is not identified with eIDs:
  — the stock cannot be processed and must be returned to the vendor
  — the stock can be held until sufficient emergency tags can be obtained and attached
  — the stock may be slaughtered without tags on the direction of a NSW Compliance Officer or government veterinarian on welfare grounds and must be correctly linked to the PIC of origin as determined by the NVD.

What will I need to do?

At a minimum, all processing plants must be fitted with sheep and goat eID readers and compatible software to upload the eIDs to the NLIS database, at or post slaughter. This is the same as per the current requirements for cattle.

Each processor should develop a site/business plan looking at what equipment and software is required. Each processor will be unique in relation to the number of readers and software requirements.

Other optional equipment that can be integrated with eID readers and software include automatic drafters, scales and hook tracking.

What do I do if my equipment doesn't arrive or is not working by 30 June 2024?

For processors, if you are not set up in time to be able to scan sheep and goat eIDs by 30 June 2024, you must be able to provide proof of purchase of equipment before 30 June 2024, and consult with your providers for estimated delivery and installation times.

What do I do if I can't reach 100% eID read rate?

Potential causes of eID tags not being read successfully are the:

- eID is damaged
- reader is experiencing interference
- reader is damaged.

If the issue is with the tag, you may have to manually record the visual NLIS ID number printed on the exterior of the eID or fit an emergency eID to the animal. If the issue is with your reader or other equipment, contact your equipment manufacturer.

What do we do with goats that have leg bands?

Any goats presenting for processing with leg bands are required to have the leg bands scanned and uploaded into the NLIS database (the leg-band contains a microchip). This may be completed by scanning with a handheld reader, positioning a fixed panel reader to scan the goats' back legs or reading and recording the NLIS serial number on the exterior of eID manually.

Can eID be used to identify stolen stock?

Lost, stolen or stray stock can have a status assigned to their individual eID, which is then recorded in the NLIS database as an individual device status. Providing the eID device has not been removed, Integrity Systems Company will send an automated warning email to the NSW DPI NLIS Enquiries Email Inbox when that device is scanned by a saleyard or abattoir operator, or producer.

Will harvested rangeland goats have to be fitted with eIDs?

No, harvested rangeland goats will not have to be identified with an eID if they are captured from the wild and sold directly to a processor, or via one registered depot. All farmed goats and all sheep must be fitted with eIDs when they are sold directly to a processor.