



Farmnote

Livestock identification and movement: cattle and buffalo

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Stock to be identified

Identification of livestock is required by law under the *Stock (Identification and Movement) Act 1970* and assists owners by deterring theft, helping to recover stolen animals and in tracing disease. The *Enzootic Diseases Regulations, 1970* require the use of National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) identification for tracing for disease control purposes.

Various methods are used to identify stock including freeze and fire branding, ear tattoos, National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) electronic devices, tags, and earmarks.

Brand and Property Identification Code

All owners of cattle and buffalo must register a brand and will be allocated earmarks and a Property Identification Code (PIC). See Note 139, "Registering and updating a brand" for details on how to register a brand and allocation of PICs.

Branding equipment

Equipment for applying the registered brand or registered earmark must not be removed from the property without a permit from the Department of Agriculture and Food. NLIS electronic devices registered to a specific PIC (and therefore a specific property) can only be applied to animals while on that property unless a permit has been issued by an inspector. NLIS electronic devices cannot normally be taken to a saleyard or similar facilities to be applied to cattle.

Offences

Under the *Stock (Identification & Movement) Act, 1970*:

- Possessing stock that are not legally identified.
- Using another person's registered brand or registered earmark.
- Possessing another person's registered branding or earmarking equipment.

The penalty for a breach of the legislation may be up to \$3000.

Under the *Enzootic Diseases Regulations, 1970*:

- Using another person's NLIS electronic devices.
- Trading / moving animals without correct NLIS identification.
- Failure to transfer animals on the NLIS database after movements between PICs.

The penalty for each breach of this legislation may be up to \$5000.

Cattle and buffalo must be branded or earmarked.

Branding

A brand can be applied as a freeze or fire brand on the left rump or shoulder, measuring at least 150 mm long and 50 mm high. Firebrands must not be applied to horns of cattle but they are permissible in buffalo.

Earmarks

If the registered earmark is used, then it must be applied to the ear nominated on the Brand Certificate and it must be at least 12 mm in height at its maximum point. Take care when applying the earmark to ensure that it appears identical to the position on the diagram on the Brand Certificate.

The appearance of the earmark will alter if it is applied to the ear from a different position i.e. from below or behind the ear versus from the front. See diagrams 2(a) & 2(b)

Age of branding or earmarking

The age when branding or earmarking is required depends on the location of the run.

Cattle in the South West Land Division (i.e. agricultural areas) must be branded or earmarked before:

- six months of age or
- being removed from the property, which ever occurs first.

Cattle in pastoral areas must be branded or earmarked before:

- 18 months of age or
- being removed from the property, which ever occurs first.

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Only approved ear punch/pliers are to be used - check with the manufacturer.

Spayed females

In addition to the branding requirements, spayed females must also be marked with a 20-40 mm diameter circular hole in the ear opposite the one allocated for the registered earmark.

HGP treated cattle

Cattle treated with hormonal growth promotants (HGP) must be marked with a triangular hole in the ear opposite to the one allocated for the registered earmark.

Stock already identified - Existing brands and earmarks

If purchased stock already have brands that are easily read, there is no need to replace these, provided sale documents are kept. **If animals have an earmark, do not apply another.**

If newly introduced stock are neither branded nor earmarked (i.e. from interstate), then they must be identified appropriately with the owner's brand or earmark within 14 days of arrival.

Purchased stock already fitted with an NLIS electronic device must NOT have them removed. To register change of ownership and/or location, the NLIS database needs to be updated, within 48 hours of their movement, by the responsible party (the saleyard, export depot or purchaser of the stock), thereby transferring the cattle to the new PIC .

If owners wish to brand newly acquired stock, the registered brand must be applied immediately below the existing brand. If an age mark is present, the registered brand must be applied immediately below that.

Exemptions to branding or earmarking

All cattle must be branded or earmarked before removal from a property unless they are exempt as below.

Calves less than two weeks old

The *Stock (Identification & Movement) Act, 1970* allows calves less than two weeks old to be removed from their property of birth without a brand or earmark provided the waybill states the sex, breed and colour of the calf, the registered brand of the owner and owner's PIC on the NLIS device attached to the calf.

Calves less than six months old with mother

The *Stock (Identification & Movement) Act, 1970* does not require branding or earmarking of calves less than six months old if they are accompanied by their mother when removed from their birth property, providing the waybill states the number of stock, registered brand, registered earmark and PIC.

Stock exported to certain overseas countries

An identification exemption permit may be granted for stock that are to be exported to certain overseas countries. This exemption must be applied for before there is a requirement to identify the stock and can remain in effect for up to one year. It is possible to apply for an extension to this time. Permits can be obtained from a stock inspector after provision of evidence that the stock are to be exported.

Stud cattle

The registered Breed Society mark can be used as an ear tattoo (except for Friesians which are identified by a photograph registered with the Breed Society) in the ear not allocated for the registered earmark.

Stud stock which are removed from the run for show or sale as stud animals do not need to display the registered brand. Stud animals sent to slaughter or sold as commercial and not stud stock, must display the registered brand or registered earmark.

There is an exception for stud cattle older than three years being sold directly for slaughter. They can be identified by the following alternative methods:

- an ear tag with the registered brand or
- a tail tag with the registered brand written legibly in permanent ink or
- the brand which is not less than 150 mm long and not less than 50 mm high applied using a waterbased paint to the near / left rump or shoulder.

Stud stock must be identified with NLIS electronic devices the same as other cattle.

Any other exemptions

There are no other exemptions from the branding or earmarking requirements allowed under the current *Stock (Identification & Movement) Act*. The Chief Inspector of Stock may grant exemptions from the NLIS requirements of the *Enzootic Diseases Act* if there is a compelling reason.

All cattle must be identified with an NLIS device

The *Enzootic Diseases Regulations, 1970* require that all cattle and buffalo, *including all calves*, be identified with an NLIS electronic device before being moved off the property. The only exemptions to this are for cattle moving directly to abattoirs for slaughter or to an approved live export depot for live export.

The purchaser or receiver of the cattle must also update the NLIS database once they have been moved.

NLIS electronic devices

NLIS electronic devices, either ear devices or rumen bolus/ear tag combinations, can be ordered through agricultural merchandise outlets.

These devices can be used to access any market - abattoir, live export or other. Cattle moving from their property of birth require white devices. However, all cattle leaving a property other than that of their birth for *any* other location must have orange devices if they are not already NLIS identified. Refer to the NLIS Fact Sheet series for detailed procedure.

Moving cattle and buffalo

No cattle or buffalo can be moved off a property without having a **brand or earmark**, the **correct NLIS identification** and a completed **waybill**. This enables animals to be traced in the event of disease outbreak or the discovery of chemical residues in meat. NLIS identification can be a transaction ear or tail tag or an electronic device, depending on the situation and

intended destination and according to the *Enzootic Diseases Regulations, 1970*.

Waybills

As a requirement of the *Stock (Identification and Movement) Act 1970*, all stock being transported must be accompanied by a completed waybill. Most buyers also require an NVD (National Vendor Declaration). To assist producers, the NVD has been approved as a waybill (NVD/Waybill). The NVD/Waybill provides proof that specific stock are being moved with the owner's consent and includes the following information:

- Number and type of stock;
- Registered brand;
- Registered earmark;
- PIC;
- Original owner's name, address and signature;
- Name of consignee and destination address;
- The carrier's details and signature;
- A distinguishing serial number;
- If the NVD is signed, it declares that the livestock have met all the requirements of the LPA Program and animal material feeding restrictions.

It is the responsibility of stock owners, not livestock carriers, to provide a waybill or NVD/Waybill. NVD/Waybills are obtained from Meat & Livestock Australia by phone on 1800 683 111 or via the internet. To register for the NVD/Waybill, you will have to provide MLA with your PIC.

Plain waybill books are still available from the Department of Agriculture and Food and can be used in circumstances where an NVD is not required, e.g. transporting between properties covered by the same PIC.

Waybills (or NVD/waybills) must be completed in triplicate, including signatures of the original owner, the consignee (only on the original and first copy, as the second copy is retained by the original owner) and the carrier. The original and first copy must accompany the stock.

All copies must be retained for **three years**:

- the original by the consignee;
- the first copy by the carrier;
- the second copy by the original owner/consignor.

Recording various brands and earmarks on waybills

Where a consignment consists of stock displaying various brands and earmarks, the waybill must contain the following information:

- Brand/earmark description and the number and description of animals displaying the four most numerous brands or earmarks.
- The brands for the total number of remaining animals may be described as 'various'.
- There should only ever be one PIC on the waybill as they are all leaving the same location.

Example

If there are 60 animals in a consignment with 52 animals displaying the four most common brands/earmarks, then the waybill may appear as follows.

Waybill information

No.	Description	Brand	Earmark	PIC
20	20 Hford bulls	7ZT		WNBU0028
15	15 Friesian strs		A4 B4	"
10	10 Angus hfrs		B7 E9	"
7	7 Angus strs	D8C		"
8	Various			"

The earmark, if used, must be described by using either the coded earmark index (i.e. position shape, position shape A4 B4) as given on the Brand Certificate or by drawing the outline of an ear with the earmark symbol(s) as seen on the ear of the animal.

Waybill exemptions

Permit to Move

No waybill is required if stock are being moved under the direction of a Department of Agriculture and Food inspector who has issued a 'Permit to Move'^{***}.

Between property movements

In situations where stock are moved repeatedly between properties with the same PIC, a special permit^{**} can be obtained from the Department of Agriculture and Food, avoiding the need for a waybill and a permit to move branding and earmarking equipment and NLIS devices.

Stock from other States

Stock which have been imported from outside Western Australia and are accompanied by the WA Interstate Health Certificate^{**} do not require a waybill. The NLIS database will still require updating by the receiver to register the change of PIC.

Stock moving to other States

Stock which are leaving the State and are accompanied by the required importing state's Health Certificate^{**} do not require a waybill. The NLIS database will still require updating by the receiver to register the change of PIC.

Waybill Inspections

Stock in transit can be inspected for correct identification and waybills by a Department of Agriculture and Food inspector or police officer at any time.

^{**}These documents must accompany the stock at all times.

See also

NLIS Fact Sheet Series, No. 1-15

Farmnote No.81/2005 'Livestock identification and movement : sheep and goats'

Note : 135 'Livestock identification and movement : horses'

Note : 138 'Livestock identification and movement : pigs'

Farmnote No. 115/99 'Livestock identification and movement : deer, camelids and ostriches'

Protection of Animal and Property Health Status

Livestock and machinery, fodder and people can introduce animal and plant diseases, weed seeds and pests that can threaten your production and viability and that of the industry. It is important to develop a suitable biosecurity plan for your property to reduce the potential for these problems occurring.

Information to assist with minimising risk with your livestock is available in Farmnote 43/2002, "Biosecurity in the livestock industries". Broader, whole farm information is presented in Farmnote 71/2002 (reviewed 2005), "Farm Biosecurity".

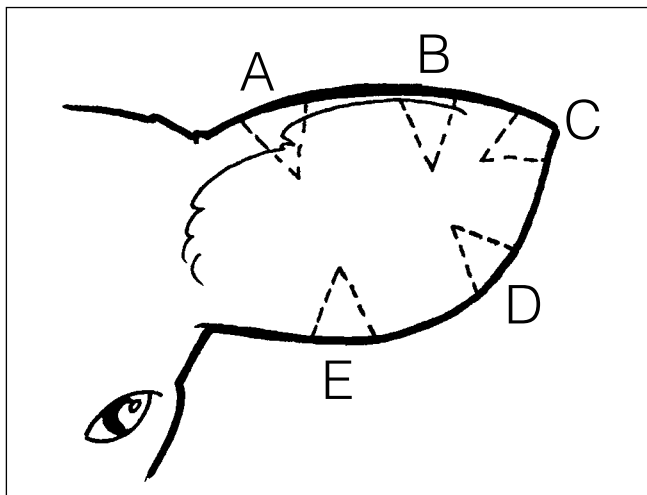


Figure 1. Diagram showing the position of an earmark

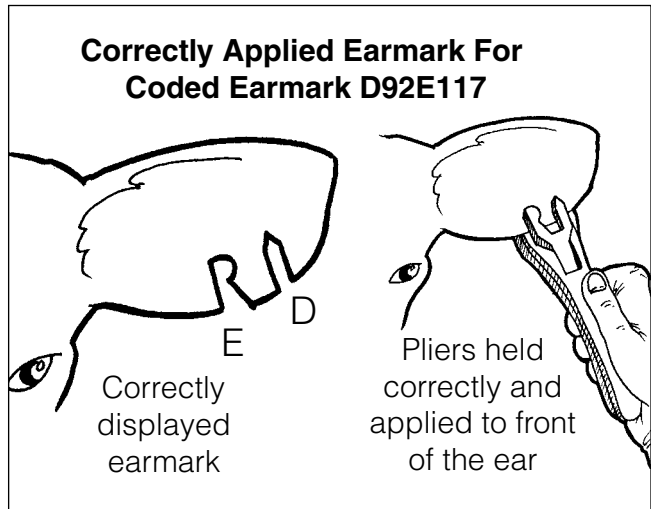


Figure 2a. Correct method of applying an earmark

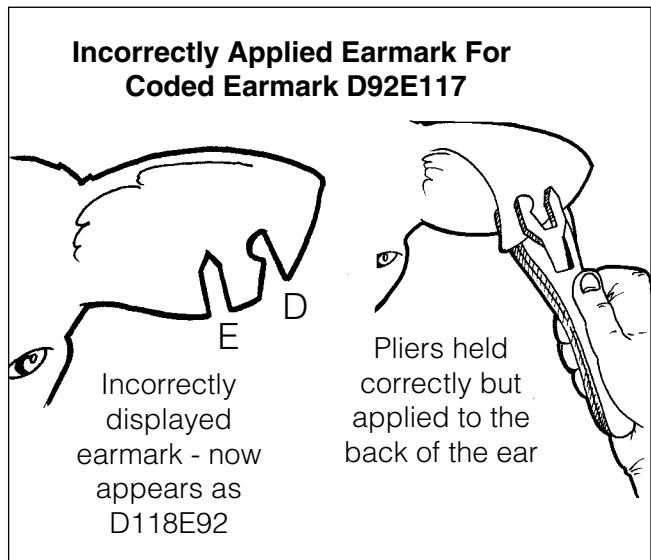


Figure 2b. Incorrect method of applying an earmark