

TAGS AND TAGGING

Can you still register calves on-line?

Yes, this facility is still available. There has been no change to how calves are registered online using APHIS Online. BVD test results will only be reported when the calf has been registered DAERA. Queries regarding calf registration should be directed towards DAERA (03002007840).

How do I ensure my order for tags comes on time as I have animals that I need to tag to comply with the programme guidelines?

Order tags as soon as possible (as they will take approximately 7-10 days to be delivered). These tags can be obtained from any of the designated tag suppliers. Details of suppliers of these tags can be found at www.animalhealthni.com/documents or contact the helpdesk on 028 79639333 for advice.

Is a new tagger required for tags and will it be sent with the tag order?

A new tagger is needed to insert the tissue sample tags. This tagger can be obtained when ordering BVD tags with your tag supplier.

I have surplus official ID tags left over, can these be used after March 2016?

Yes. Supplementary (button) tissue sample tags can be ordered from your tag supplier to match existing pairs of approved identity tags already in your possession that you have carried over after March 1st 2016. These button tags must bear the full identification number of the animal on which they are used to ensure sample traceability. When ordering you should ensure that you allow sufficient time for the tags to arrive before you need to start tagging. These will take approximately 7-10 days to be delivered.

On which ear should the tissue sample tag be inserted?

It is recommended that the tissue tag is inserted in the right ear. (i.e. the right ear from the animal's perspective).

Where on the calf's ear should the tag be positioned to get an accurate test?

A leaflet giving details of the tagging process is included with your initial tag order. This is also available from www.animalhealthni.com. Always place the female part on the inside and the male part on the outside of the ear. Use a firm constant pressure to close the applicator. The tag should be inserted in the centre of the ear as usual.

Should the calf be registered before the sample is collected?

This is not necessary. Because the sample is taken at tagging, you will be tagging (which is the beginning of the registration process) and sampling the calf at the same time. However, you should subsequently avoid any delay in registering the calves as results will not be reported back to you until the registration process on APHIS is completed.

There was a delay in registering the calf but a sample was submitted for BVD testing.

When will the result come back?

AHWN is only able to issue results when the calf has been registered on APHIS. Therefore, it is essential to register your calves promptly.

If the tissue sample tag is damaged while inserting into the calf's ear, what should I do?

You will need to re-sample this animal(s) to determine its BVD status. This can be done using a replacement button tag for the sample which can be ordered from your tag supplier. Alternatively,

you can use the next set of official ID tags and discard the damaged tag (and its matching pair) by cutting it up and disposing of it, or have a blood sample collected and submitted by your veterinary practitioner.

If I am notified that the tissue sample tag is empty - what should I do?

You will need to re-sample this animal(s) to determine its BVD status. This can be done using a tissue sample collected by yourself using a supplementary (button) tag bearing the matching ID number which can be ordered from your tag supplier. Alternatively, you can arrange for a blood sample to be collected and submitted by your own veterinary practitioner.

Is it acceptable to send the samples in the post?

Yes – Royal Mail will process any samples provided they are correctly packaged and labelled. Samples should be placed inside a sealed plastic bag, which in turn is placed inside an envelope/outer bag (all supplied with your tags). The envelope/outer bag will already be pre-addressed by your tag supplier with the appropriate lab details, it should also be displayed with the following words “BVD tag Test- Exempt Animal Specimen”. The package should also be clearly labelled with your herd number and return address. Please ensure the correct postage is applied. The minimum postage fee for submitting tags through the postal system (even for one tag) is currently 98p (large envelope rate; 12.06.17). Royal Mail advises that the large letter fee (98p) should be sufficient for up to 10 samples provided they are packed flat, rather than bulked up within the envelope. Please see for www.royalmail.com for an up to date listing of postal charges. Underpayment and failure to package samples appropriately may lead to sample processing being delayed or samples being destroyed by Royal Mail.

What happens if the samples are lost in the post?

If you do not receive results for registered calves within 7 working days, you should contact the AHWNI helpdesk on 028 79639333 who will investigate the matter for you. Where the samples have been lost in transit, it will be necessary to re-sample the calves. This can be done using a tissue sample collected by yourself using a supplementary (button) tag bearing the matching ID number which can be ordered from your tag supplier. Alternatively, you can arrange for a blood sample to be collected and submitted by your own veterinary practitioner.

Why can't we blood sample all of the cattle in Northern Ireland and remove the disease in one year?

Logistically this would be a significant challenge. In addition, even having done this, it would not give a test result for the unborn calves being carried during that year, requiring all calves to be tested after birth anyway. The current programme of testing calves automatically gives a result for the dams also, with a negative calf result indicating that the mother of that calf is also not PI. In addition, testing of the dam only gives a snapshot for those animals on that day.

Why can't we round up all the calves and tag on a single day, rather than within 7 days of birth?

Early identification of calves helps to ensure that they are accurately assigned to the correct mother. Early identification of PI animals allows their removal at a stage when there has been minimum investment in them (feed, veterinary medicines etc.) and minimises the negative impact of their presence on farm. Early tagging ensures that persistently infected (PI) animals are identified as soon as possible after birth. This will minimise their opportunity to transmit infection to other calves, which would become more susceptible to scours and pneumonias, or to in-calf animals which would be at risk of infertility, abortion, stillbirth or producing further PI calves the following calving season.

Why do I need to put samples in a plastic bag before posting them?

Tissue punch samples have an exemption from the packaging regulations that usually apply to diagnostic samples based on the low disease risk associated with them. To comply with the terms of this exemption, the samples must be posted in a triple layer of packaging, of which the first two must be leak proof. The cap that goes over the metal punch of the tag provides the first of these layers, the sealed plastic bag the second and the outer envelope/bag the third. The envelope/outer bag should be labelled "BVD test- exempt animal specimen" to indicate that it is being posted using this exemption.

Note that it is the herdowners responsibility to ensure that samples are suitably packaged and that the appropriate postage is paid. Failure to package samples correctly or pay the full postage may delay samples being processed or may see them disposed of untested.

What happens if I mix up my BVD tags

If you realise you have used the wrong BVD tag on an animal BEFORE you send it away to the lab for testing, then please DISCARD it and order a supplementary button tag for that animal. If you realise you have used the wrong BVD tag on an animal AFTER you have received a result, then please call the AHWNI BVD help desk on 028 79639333 for guidance. We will notify the appropriate lab so the result can be removed. In such a case you must order a new supplementary tag for the animal and retest it with the correct number. The BVD tag must ALWAYS match the ID tag.

What do I do if I insert a supplementary (button) tag in the wrong animal?

Each button tag is labelled with an official ID and must only be used in the matching animal to provide traceability of the result back to that animal. If you realise you have used a button tag in the wrong animal BEFORE you send it off to the lab for testing, then you need to DISCARD the sample and order a further supplementary button tag for that animal. If you realise you have used the button tag on the wrong animal AFTER you have received a result, then please call the BVD help desk on 028 79639333.