



**An Roinn Talmhaíochta,
Bia agus Mara**
Department of Agriculture,
Food and the Marine



THE NATIONAL SHEEP IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM (NSIS)

A Step by Step Guide

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THE NATIONAL SHEEP IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM (NSIS)

Introduction

This booklet updates the previous 'Step by Step' Guide to the National Sheep Identification System (NSIS) issued by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) in May 2019. It explains the current sheep identification and movement rules that must be complied with by sheep farmers.

The EU-wide system for the identification, registration and movement of sheep is set down in Council Regulation (EU) No 429/2016 and its supplementing Delegated and Implementing Regulations which came into force on 21 April 2021. This, and other animal traceability aspects of the EU legislation was transposed in national law via the European Union (Identification and Tracing) Regulations 2023 (S.I. No. 254 of 2023). S.I. 290 of 2023 also applies as it relates to ovine animals. These legislative requirements are implemented in Ireland through the NSIS.

All sheep moving from any holding must be identified electronically. Lambs moving directly to slaughter from the holding of their birth while aged under 12 months may be identified with a single official yellow electronic tag (in the right ear). **All other sheep, without exception**, must be identified with a full EID tag set consisting of one yellow official conventional tag (in the left ear) and a matching official yellow electronic tag (in the right ear).

The general NSIS rules remain broadly unchanged in relation to the registration of a holding, the maintenance of an up- to-date flock register and the completion of an annual sheep census remain unchanged. However, sheep imported from outside the EU (including Great Britain) must now retain their original tags and must also be identified with an EID set of tags identifying the holding to which they first moved in Ireland (see Section H).

The NSIS encompasses all stages of sheep production through producers, marts, export assembly centres, slaughterhouses, knackerries and others, ensuring that Ireland has full traceability for all sheep on an individual basis as required under both EU and Irish Law.

Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, October 2023

Guide to the National Sheep Identification System

Overview

Main elements of the National Sheep Identification System (NSIS)

There are 5 main elements in the National Sheep Identification System, all of which must be complied with by any person who keeps sheep. These are:

1. Registration

Any person who intends to hold or keep sheep in the State must, prior to obtaining any sheep, first register their holding with the DAFM Regional Office (RO) responsible for the area in which the holding is situated. On registration, new flock keepers are issued with a herd number, a unique sheep designator number, a sheep flock register and a book of 25 sets of personalised sheep dispatch/movement documents.

2. Identification

You must tag/identify all animals before they leave your holding or before they reach 9 months of age, whichever is the earlier date. However, sheep that are being reared in intensive conditions must be identified before 6 months of age or before they leave the holding, whichever is earlier. The vast majority of Irish sheep are reared under extensive conditions.

All sheep without exception must be electronically tagged before they move from a holding. Lambs aged under 12 months that are moving directly to a slaughter premises from the holding of their birth may be tagged with a **single yellow official electronic (EID) tag in the animal's right ear**. All other sheep, regardless of when they were born or where they are being moved to must, on movement from a holding, be tagged with a full **official yellow electronic (EID) tag set**. This includes lambs being moved through a mart, to another farm, to a show etc., as well as all sheep being exported or retained for breeding. (Identification with an electronic bolus set is also permitted.)

The National Sheep Identification System (NSIS) operates on the basis of one ID for life from the holding of origin. Therefore, the tag number a lamb receives at the time of first identification on the holding of its birth will be the number that is recorded on all movement documentation associated with that sheep throughout its life. The only exception to this is where both identification tags are lost.

You must not move sheep of any kind onto your holding unless they are tagged with a **yellow electronic (EID) tag set** (or electronic bolus set).

3. Movement

EU legislation requires that you must complete a dispatch/movement document in respect of all sheep moved off your holding and you must also ensure that you receive a dispatch document in respect of all sheep that move on to your holding.

Newly approved keepers will automatically be issued with a book of 25 sets of personalised dispatch documents which must be used when moving any sheep from the holding. Additional books of dispatch documents can be ordered from DAFM, as required. (See Section J for contact details.)

Movements of sheep to mart and slaughter premises are notified directly to the Department's Animal Identification and Movement (AIM) system by the mart manager or the Food Business Operator (FBO), as appropriate. However, in the case of sheep moved onto your farm directly from another farm (not through a mart) you, as the new herd keeper, must notify this movement to your local DAFM Regional Office (RO), from where the movement will be recorded on AIM. To meet this requirement, you must submit the pink copy of the relevant dispatch document(s) to your local RO. Before doing this, you must ensure that they contain all the required movement information. In this regard, the destination of the sheep is critical in maintaining traceability of sheep movements and this information (including relevant herd number) is essential.

The Department has introduced an option for the notification of farm-to-farm movements directly to AIM via a mobile app named 'AIM Services'. (See Section K). This provides keepers with a digital option to instantly notify DAFM of the movement of sheep onto their holding. Where a movement is submitted successfully through the app, the receiving keeper is not required to post the pink copy of the dispatch document to the RVO.

Movements recorded through the app are notified to DAFM's AIM database in real time and are available to view immediately by both parties to the movement in their individual apps and in their own agfood.ie accounts.

4. Record Keeping

You must maintain an up-to-date flock register at all times. You are required to keep records, including copies of dispatch documents in respect of all sheep moved both on to and off your holding, for a period of 3 years. Examples of how to complete the register are contained at the back of the register itself.

5. Census

You are required by law to complete and return an annual sheep census inventory to DAFM and to record that detail in your Flock Register. Failure to submit a census in time, to record the census figure in your flock register or the submission of inaccurate census information may lead to penalties and can also hamper claims made under certain schemes.

Section A - Format of Tag Numbers

The format of the tag number on all NSIS approved sheep tags is as follows:

First 2 letters (IE)	Country code for Ireland Will always be "IE"
First 2 digits (04)	Species code Will always be "04" for sheep and goats.
Next 5 digits -	Flock designator Will always be your sheep/goat designator number which is unique to your holding unless you are buying a specific replacement tag for an animal born on another holding.
Final 5 digits -	Individual Animal Number This is the individual tag number for each sheep.
Check Letter -	Tags and boluses also include a check letter which is a security measure which can be used to verify the authenticity of any tag and bolus number.

Therefore, the individual sheep identification numbers printed on all new sheep tags and boluses purchased by you will commence with **IE 04** followed by your unique 5 digit designator, the 5 digit individual animal ID, and a check letter

Scanning of electronic sheep tags

While the identification number displayed visually on both conventional and electronic sheep tags commences with the letters 'IE', the microchips embedded in electronic tags are encoded with a fully numeric series of digits.

'372' is the EU-allocated country code for Ireland, based on ISO 366.

Accordingly, on scanning, all electronic tags issued by NSIS- approved tag suppliers will commence with the digits '372', replacing the visual 'IE' code.

Examples of how number format can appear on sheep tags.

Figure 1. Wrap around Tag Example

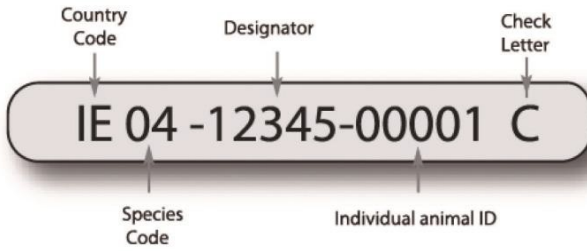


Figure 2. Leaf Tag Example

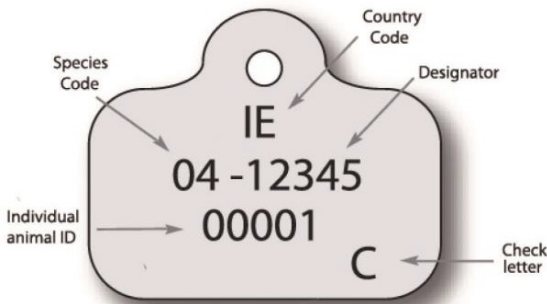
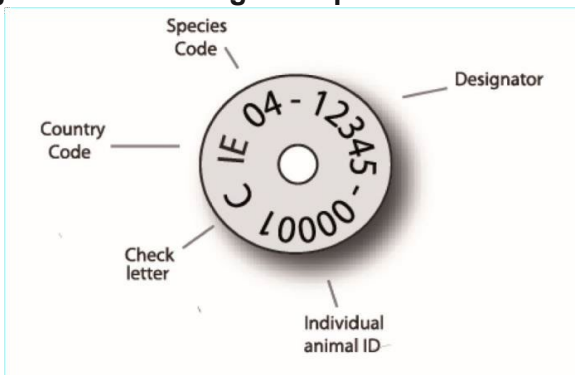


Figure 3. Button Tag Example



Section B - NSIS Tags and Tagging Requirements

In general, lambs must be identified (tagged) by 9 months of age (6 months if intensively reared) or on leaving the holding of origin, whichever is the earlier date. In general, sheep in Ireland are not reared intensively so 9 months or on leaving the holding of origin (whichever earliest) will apply in almost all cases.

With effect from 1st June 2019, all sheep, without exception, must be identified electronically before leaving the holding of their birth.

Only approved tags or boluses that are sourced from an approved tag supplier can be used as official identification (ID) markings under the National Sheep Identification System (NSIS). A list of approved tag suppliers is included at the back of this booklet.

There are two categories of official electronic tag approved for use in identifying sheep in accordance with NSIS as follows:

B.1 Single EID Tag

A **Single EID (electronic) Tag** is the minimum requirement for use on lambs under 12 months of age moving **directly from the holding of origin (birth) to a slaughter plant**.

Single EID tags are issued for this purpose only and cannot be used in the context of any other sheep movements.

A single EID tag is yellow and should be placed in the lamb's right ear before it leaves the holding of origin or before it reaches 9 months of age (whichever is soonest) only if the animal is intended to move directly to slaughter from the holding of its birth.

Example



or

It is also acceptable for lambs moving directly to slaughter from the holding of origin to be identified with a full EID tag/bolus set as per the next section, should this be the preferred option of the keeper. Lambs identified with a full EID tag set/electronic bolus set will require no further tagging to comply with EU or NSIS rules in the event that they do not move directly to a slaughter plant before reaching 12 months of age, as may have been originally intended by the keeper.

B.2 Full EID Tag Set or EID Bolus Set

From 1st June 2019, a full **EID (electronic) Tag Set** or **EID (electronic) Bolus Set** is required for all sheep other than those referred to at B.1. This includes lambs being retained for breeding, lambs moving to marts, lambs going to another farm or to shows etc.

A full **EID Tag Set** is made up of one yellow electronic tag placed in the animal's right ear and a corresponding conventional yellow tag, bearing the same individual identification number, placed in the animal's left ear.

Example



An **EID Bolus Set** is made up of an electronic bolus implanted into the stomach of the sheep and a conventional blue tag placed in the sheep's left ear, bearing the same individual identification number as that encoded in the implanted electronic bolus. Lambs must be a certain weight before they can be given a bolus. The minimum lamb weight for each bolus is supplied by the bolus manufacturer.

Example



Blue conventional tags indicating the presence of a ruminal bolus.

As referred to in Section A, when an electronic tag/bolus is scanned, the identification number displayed will commence with the numbers '372' in place of the letters 'IE' printed on the tag.

B.3 Management Information on Tags

In the case of leaf tags and button or combi-tags, either the male or female part of the tag may be left blank. Flock-owners ordering new, or replacement tags can opt to have management information such as their pedigree identifier or any other information printed on the blank part of a tag.

B.4 Sheep Purchased or Identified Prior to 1st June 2019

All sheep identified with either a full EID tag set or an EID Bolus set fitted prior to 1st June 2019 are in full compliance with the new tagging requirements and there is no requirement to retag these animals.

Any lambs bought in to a flock prior to 1st June 2019 and identified with a single conventional tag at that time must be upgraded to either a full EID tag set or an electronic bolus set before they leave your holding in order to comply with the current NSIS rules.

This can be done by either:

- (i) ordering a single EID tag to match the existing tag in the sheep and fitting it to the animal's right ear; or
- (ii) removing the existing tag and replacing it with either a full EID tag set or EID bolus set and recording the identification number of the tag that has been removed and the corresponding identification code of the new tag or bolus set in your flock register.

B.5 Replacement Tags

Where either the EID or non-EID part of a tag set is lost, individual replacement tags can be sourced from any NSIS-approved tag supplier by specifying both the tag type required (conventional or electronic) and the matching tag number on the remaining tag.

Alternatively, the remaining tag can be removed and replaced with either a

new full EID tag set or bolus set. In these circumstances, keepers must correlate this change in their flock register – i.e. the details of the original and the replacement numbers must be accurately detailed.

The creation of an EID Tag Set using a previously purchased single EID tag and a new matching conventional tag is not permitted. Single EID tags can only be used to identify lambs aged under 12 months moving directly from the holding of origin to a slaughter plant.

In the event that a single electronic tag has already been applied to a lamb and it is subsequently decided to move the animal to a holding other than directly to a slaughter plant while the lamb is under 12 months of age, the original EID tag should be removed and replaced with a new EID tag set (or EID bolus set), correlating the tag numbers in the associated flock register.

B.6 Tag Readers

A tag reader is an electronic device that is capable of scanning an electronic tag or bolus and providing a read-out of the tag or bolus number scanned. Tag readers should be capable of scanning all tags and boluses approved under NSIS and in turn all tags and boluses should be able to be scanned by all readers. This is because all tags and readers must be ISO compliant (ISO 11784 and 11785). Your tag supplier will advise on the most suitable reader for your needs should you wish to purchase a reader.

The sheep identification and movement rules in place from 1st June 2019 do not require keepers to purchase tag readers. The extension of electronic identification to all sheep provides an opportunity for all marts and slaughter plants to operate as approved Central Points of Recording (CPRs), scanning the tag numbers of all presented sheep and subsequently providing the presenting keeper with a printed list of all presented tag numbers (LPT). This removes the requirement for keepers to individually list the tag number of each sheep presented in a batch on the relevant dispatch document when moving sheep to one of these approved premises.

CPRs are dealt with in more detail at Section D.

However, where sheep are moved to a premises that is not an approved CPR, the dispatch documents accompanying those sheep continue to be

required to include a list of associated individual tag numbers. The possession of a tag reader could greatly assist keepers in this regard.

Sheep identified with electronic tags/ boluses can be scanned using a tag reader, many of which are capable of producing lists of numbers scanned. These lists can be attached securely to the relevant dispatch document for movements to marts and slaughter plants that are not operating as approved CPRs, to shows and also for farm-to-farm movements. This fulfils the requirement to list the individual tag numbers of all sheep presented in a batch on the dispatch document.

Where a tag reader capable of generating a printed tag list is not available for movements other than to approved CPRs, keepers will continue to be required to manually list the individual tag number of each sheep in the batch, on the accompanying dispatch document.

Section C - When and How to Tag

C.1 Sheep Moving out of your Holding

From 1st June 2019 the minimum identification requirement for lambs under 12 months of age moving directly from the holding of origin (birth) to a slaughter plant is a single EID (electronic) tag. These lambs can also be identified with a full EID tag/bolus set should this be the preferred option of the keeper.

All other sheep regardless of age or destination, including lambs going to mart, to another farm, to a show, for export etc. **must** be identified by means of a full EID tag set or a full electronic bolus set, as set out at section B.2.

C.2 Sheep Moving in to your Holding

With effect from 1st June 2019, all sheep moved from any location into your flock (including from marts, from dealers, directly from another farm etc.) must already be electronically identified with either a full EID tag set or an electronic bolus set as per B.2. With effect from 1st June 2019, there are no circumstances under which any sheep can move onto your holding unless it is identified with two forms of identification as specified above.

Where a purchased animal has a blue tag in its ear, you must ensure that the animal has been scanned with an EID reader to verify that there is a corresponding bolus in its stomach. The number of that bolus must match the number printed on the bolus tag in the animal's left ear.

Similarly, for sheep purchased with a full set of EID tags, you must check that the identification numbers on both the electronic and conventional tags in the ears of sheep are the same.

As referred to at Section A, it should be noted that while the numbers on physical tags (both conventional and electronic) commence with 'IE', denoting Ireland as the country of origin of the animal, corresponding microchip readings will commence with the numbers '372' in place of the 'IE'. '372' is the numeric code allocated to Ireland by the EU, based on ISO 3166.

It is accepted that lambs bought in to a flock prior to 1st June 2019 may not now comply with the current rules. These must now have their identification tags upgraded to either a full EID set of tags, or an electronic bolus set before they leave the holding on which they are located on 1st June 2019, in order to comply with the NSIS rules.

C.3 Tagging Best Practice

While there is not a problem in general with sore and infected ears post tagging, the low observed rates can be further reduced by farmers following best practice for tagging sheep which includes the following: -

- Tagging should be carried out in good hygienic conditions with clean hands and equipment to minimise infection rates and the transference of infection from sheep to sheep by the process.
- Tagging at the correct time of year in order to avoid fly strike.
- Where possible it is best to tag on a dry day.
- Placing the tag in the correct part of the ear is very important for retention and low infection rates. The tagging site is approximately one third of the length of the ear from the head. This is generally the strongest and thickest part of the ear.
- Feel where the veins are and insert the tag midway in height of the ear, in the middle of the two main veins.
- The female part of the tag (section or button with the hole) must always be placed in the inner side of the ear.
- The disinfection of equipment and the sheep's ear prior to tagging each animal.
- After tagging both sections of the tag should be twisted 360 degrees to loosen the tag and increase airflow.

C.4 Welfare issues relating to Sheep tagging

Farmers should not tag animals if there is a concurrent skin infection in the flock – for example Orf or Periorbital Eczema – but should wait until the infection has cleared. However, where infection does arise the farmer should do the following:

1. Contact his/her own Veterinary Surgeon for best advice and best practice on how to treat the infection.
2. If it is deemed necessary to remove the tag(s) to allow the ear(s) to heal then the farmer should record the removal in his/her flock register and retain the removed ear tags in case of an inspection.
3. Retag the affected animal(s) as soon as possible after the ear has healed.

If the farmer follows this procedure outlined at 1-3 above, there should be no issues on cross compliance for animals that have had their tags removed on animal welfare grounds.

Section D – Central Points of Recording (CPR's)

D1. Overview

A CPR is a premises approved by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) to read and record tag numbers of electronically identified sheep, on behalf of keepers.

The extension of electronic identification to all sheep moving from 1st June 2019 provides marts and slaughter plants with the opportunity to operate as CPRs, approved by DAFM.

D2. Moving Sheep to an Approved CPR

When moving sheep to an approved CPR, batches of animals relating to a specific dispatch document must be physically segregated from other sheep.

Approved CPRs will be required to provide the relevant keeper with a printed list of presented tag numbers (LPT) relating to each specific batch of electronically identified sheep presented at their premises. This list will be provided as soon as possible but within a maximum of 48 hours. In the case of marts operating as CPRs, a printed list of all sheep purchased on the premises in a particular batch should be provided to the purchaser prior to the animals leaving the CPR premises.

The first CPRs commenced operations on 1st June 2019. DAFM will maintain an updated list of approved CPRs on the DAFM website to keep keepers informed of the locations of such premises.

When you bring sheep to an approved CPR, you will continue to be required to complete a dispatch document recording information relevant to the movement of those animals, but you will no longer be required to list the individual tag numbers of the sheep presented in each batch. In that regard, all you will be required to do is to record the total number of sheep being moved in the relevant box on the document. The tags will be scanned by the CPR, and you will be provided with a printed list of presented tag numbers (LPT) which you must associate with the correct dispatch document.

As the presenting keeper, it is your responsibility to check the list provided by the CPR, paying particular attention to the serial number printed on it. You should ensure that this is the same as the serial number of the associated dispatch document. When you are satisfied that the total number of tags listed matches the total number you recorded on the associated dispatch document, you should attach the list of presented tag numbers (LPT) securely to that dispatch document. It is very important that you check this list very carefully once you receive it to ensure that the total number of lambs presented is correctly recorded on the printout, as this document must be retained for inspection purposes.

Where, in exceptional circumstances, you are not satisfied with the information recorded on the printed LPT provided, you should bring this to the attention of the CPR immediately with a view to resolving the matter without delay.

D3. Moving Sheep to a Premises that is Not an Approved CPR

Recording of the individual sheep tag numbers on the dispatch document will continue to be required in instances where sheep are moved to locations that have not been approved by DAFM to operate as CPRs (e.g. farm-to-farm movements, movements to shows, marts and slaughter plants not operating as CPRs etc.). However, where the producer has an electronic reader capable of producing a printout of the tag numbers of the animals contained in a consignment, the secure attachment of this to the dispatch document will suffice for traceability purposes. You will then not be required to record the total number of animals in the batch on the dispatch document itself.

Where a tag reader is not available in these circumstances, the individual number of each sheep in the consignment must continue to be written clearly on the dispatch document, along with all other required movement and food chain information.

Section E – Movement Documentation, Record Keeping and Inspections

E.1 Dispatch / Movement Document

General

Every time a sheep leaves a holding, it must be accompanied by a completed dispatch/movement document. All dispatch documents are preprinted with the name, address, herd number, and flock designator of the holding's keeper. You must ensure that you never use a dispatch document that is not pre-populated with information relating to your own flock and holding.

In exceptional circumstances, emergency documents can be obtained either from your local DAFM Regional Office or from AIM Division as per Section J.2.

It is **VERY** important that all flock keepers use the most up to date version of the dispatch document and that documents are completed accurately. **The inaccurate completion of dispatch documents or the use of outdated versions of dispatch documents can lead to penalties following DAFM inspections.**

DAFM issued a new book of dispatch documents to all registered flock keepers in mid- 2019. Each individual dispatch document in the new book contains a bar-coded serial number which can be traced back to the holding to which it was issued. The inclusion of a serial number barcode provides for ease of scanning at approved Central Points of Recording (CPRs). The bar-coded serial number of each presented dispatch document will be printed on the corresponding list of presented tag numbers (LPT) provided by the CPR. This helps keepers to easily identify the dispatch document to which each list relates so that the list can be attached to the correct dispatch document. Both the dispatch document and the associated list must be retained by the presenting keeper for a period of 3 years for record-keeping and inspection purposes.

CPRs are dealt with in more detail at section D.

Unused outdated versions of NSIS dispatch documents in your possession are no longer valid and must be destroyed.

Completion of a dispatch document

When a keeper is moving animals off a holding, they must complete the dispatch document prior to the move, including details of the transporter and the destination of the batch. With effect from 1st June 2019, the requirement to provide details of the individual tag number of each animal consigned to a particular batch is determined by the type of premises to which the sheep are moved.

Where sheep are moved to an approved Central Point of Recording (CPR), (information provided at Section D) the presenting keeper will not be required to list the individual tag numbers of each animal in the batch. The CPR will provide a printed list of all tag numbers presented at the premises within a specific batch, for association with the relevant dispatch document.

However, where sheep are moved to premises that are not operating as approved CPRs, the individual animal identification numbers must be listed on the dispatch document before leaving the holding of the presenting keeper. This will be a requirement for all farm-to-farm movements, movements to shows etc. and movements to marts and slaughter plants that chose not to operate as CPRs. When listing the individual numbers of sheep in a batch that have all originated on your holding and have been tagged in sequential order, i.e. tag numbers 00001 to 00100, it is enough to write the first and last tag number on the dispatch document.

Important Note:

If you have an electronic tag reader that has the capacity to print, you can use this to print a list of all sheep consigned to a particular batch leaving your holding. This printed list may then be attached securely to the relevant dispatch document, thereby fulfilling your requirement to record each individual tag number on the dispatch document.

E.2 Notification of Permanent Farm-to-Farm Movements

Where sheep are purchased directly from another flock keeper (not through a mart) the purchaser is required to notify this movement to the local Regional Office of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) within 7 days for recording on the AIM Sheep Movement Database.

Farm to farm movements should be notified as set out in the steps below.

The image shows a complex form titled 'National Sheep Identification System (NSIS) Sheep Dispatch / Movement Document and Food Chain Information'. It includes fields for 'FCOQ Origin Name', 'Address Line 1-4', 'Herd/Flock Number', 'Sheep Designation', and 'Total number of sheep on this document'. A large table with columns for 'FCOQ', 'Date', 'Herd/Flock No.', 'Herd/Flock No.', 'Herd/Flock No.', and 'Herd/Flock No.' is present. Below the table are sections for 'Pink Copy - PURCHASER', 'Pink Copy - BUYER', and 'Yellow Copy - RETURN FOR YOUR RECORD'. The form also contains various checkboxes and signature lines for 'Pink Keeper's Signature', 'Herd/Flock No.', 'DAFM Approved Herd No.', and 'Transporter/Handler's Signature'.

1. Farmer A sells/moves sheep to Farmer B and presents him/her with the white and pink copy of the properly completed dispatch document from his/ her (Farmer A's) holding.
2. Farmer B (Purchaser or destination holding) enters his/her herd number in the proper place on the dispatch document.
3. Purchaser sends pink copy to the local RO.

For completeness, Farmer A (seller) **must** record the details of the destination herd on his/her retained (yellow) copy of the dispatch document.

The Department launched a new digital application named 'AIM Services' in September 2023. This app will undergo phased updates on an ongoing basis to ultimately facilitate the digital recording of all livestock movements directly to the DAFM AIM system.

The first phase of the 'AIM Services' app allows sheep keepers receiving sheep on to their holding from another farm to notify such movements (and temporary movement below) directly to AIM in real time.

You must have a herd keeper account with agfood.ie to download the app onto your mobile phone /laptop /iPad /tablet /computer. The 4 step process is easy to use and involves the submission of a photograph of the associated dispatch document to the app.

Keepers who use the app to successfully record sheep farm-to-farm movements on to their holding will no longer be required to post the corresponding pink dispatch document to their DAFM RVO. They will, however, be required to retain both the white and pink copies of the document in their flock register, where the movement details must also continue to be recorded.

Information on AIM Services can be found at:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/68686-animal-identification-movement-aim/#aim-portal-services>

A guide to installation of and login to the app are provided at Section K.

E3. Documentation for Temporary Movements of Sheep for short-term Grazing on a Holding which is Not Registered to the Flock-Owner

All sheep moving on a temporary basis must be identified with a full EID set of tags or an electronic bolus set prior to movement.

Normally all permanent movements of sheep directly from one farm to another (not through a mart etc.) must be notified to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) by the destination keeper/purchaser who does this by sending the pink copy of the sheep dispatch document they receive to their local Department office (RO). The movement notification requirements in relation to the temporary movement of sheep for short-term grazing on a holding not owned by the flock owner can differ depending on the circumstances as follows:

Temporary Movement to Tillage Land on a Holding where there are no Livestock.

In this instance the sheep can be moved to and from the temporary grazing without dispatch documents and without notifying DAFM of the movements.

Temporary Movement to Mixed Farm on which there are Livestock.

If there are any livestock on the temporary holding (even if housed separately) then the movement to and from the temporary holding must be notified to DAFM. However as there is no change of ownership the responsibility for notifying these movements is with the owner of the sheep. Notification of the movement to the temporary holding is made by completing a dispatch document and sending the pink copy to the local DAFM Regional Office for recording. Notification of the movement back to the holding of origin can be made by the owner sending the white copy of the same dispatch document sent to the Regional Office but the document must be clearly marked 'Return Movement from Temporary Grazing'. In the event that the number of sheep being returned to the original holding is different to the number sent in the first instance then this should also be indicated.

These movements can also be notified through the 'AIM Services' app, as set out at E.2 above. Again, where such movements are submitted successfully through the app, the keeper is not required to submit the associated documentation to the RVO. However, it remains a requirement for the documents to be retained in the flock register and the movement details recorded there.

Temporary Movement to Fragment of Mixed Farm on which there are no Livestock.

Some holdings consist of different fragments of land which are separated but which are all registered under the one holding/herd number. For example the main fragment may consist of the homestead, farm buildings and adjacent fields but there may also be another fragment either leased or owned which is separate to the main fragment but is under the same holding/herd number e.g. could be a kilometre distance between both fragments. In this instance sheep can be temporarily moved to one fragment without the need for dispatch documents and movement notifications provided there are no livestock on any part of the fragment that the sheep are being moved to.

Movement from Temporary Grazing Land direct to Mart/Factory/Abattoir

The initial movement to the temporary grazing land is covered by the previous explanations and a dispatch document and movement notification

must be made where required. However in all cases where sheep are moved from the temporary holding directly to a mart/factory/abattoir (and not back to the holding of origin) then the normal National Sheep Identification System (NSIS) requirements apply. In this case the owner of the sheep must complete a new dispatch document to accompany the sheep and must also record this movement in the flock register. It is not necessary to notify DAFM of a movement to a mart/factory/abattoir as the movement will be notified to DAFM by those locations.

Tagging & Record Keeping in Respect of Temporary Movements

Please note that in general all sheep must be tagged in accordance with the National Sheep Identification System (NSIS) by either nine months of age or on leaving the holding of origin whichever is soonest. Accordingly all sheep being moved to a temporary holding must be tagged with a full EID set of tags in accordance with NSIS prior to being moved off the holding of origin regardless of the destination. In the case of any temporary movements that need to be notified to DAFM, the flock owner is required to keep a copy of the relevant dispatch document used to notify the movement in their records **for a period of at least three years**.

Application for Credit under the Nitrates Regulations for the Organic Fertiliser Produced by Sheep being Temporarily Moved to a Different Holding for Grazing.

To request a Nitrates adjustment for sheep moved to a holding without livestock a farmer should submit a completed Record 4 (Notification of Temporary Movement of Cattle or Sheep) to Nitrates Section, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Johnstown Castle, Wexford prior to movement. Adjustments will apply to both holdings.

If sheep are moved to a holding where there are sheep or other livestock then the normal identification measures apply, i.e. completion of dispatch documents and forward to local DAFM office. Dispatch documents can be produced as documentary evidence in response to notifications of exceeding the Nitrate limits. Adjustments will apply to both holdings.

E.4 Flock Register

Your flock register should contain a complete record of all events occurring to the sheep flock. The following events must be recorded in your flock register.

1. **Date of tagging – (Event code T).** The date on which lambs are tagged and/or identified with a bolus should be recorded in the flock register along with a list of the tag numbers and the year the animals were born. If lambs are tagged as they leave the holding for slaughter, a copy of the dispatch/movement document can double as this record but the serial number of the dispatch/movement document must be recorded in the register and a copy of the dispatch document should be retained with the flock register. The year of tagging should be written in brackets after the event code in the second column.
2. **Movements on to the holding – (Event code P).** These should be recorded by noting the serial number of the incoming dispatch/movement document in your register.
3. **Movements off the holding – (Event code S).** These should be recorded by noting the serial number of the outgoing dispatch/movement document in your register.
4. **Replacing tags – (Event Code R).** Any replacement tag numbers or details of correlation should be noted in the register. Where a sheep loses a tag / tags and it is not possible to find out what the original tag number was then correlation is not relevant but this should be noted in the flock register.
5. **Deaths – (Event Code D).** The death of any animal should be noted in the register.
6. **Remarks column** - The remarks column of your register should contain the breed of the sheep and their Scrapie genotype if either of these details are known. Replacement tag details for sheep that have lost their identity should also be recorded here.

Example – Some commonly entered events in a sheep flock register.

Date	Event Code	Number of Sheep	Dispatch Document Serial Number	Tag Number(s) *	Individual Tag Number Replaced **	Remarks and/or Breed and Genotype (if
12/04/2023	S (2023)	100	12345-0123			Texel
01/09/2023	T (2023)	25		00201 to 00225		Texel
15/09/2023	P	4	67890-0211			Belcare
12/10/2023	R	2		00226-00227		Texel
20/10/2023	D	1		00217		Texel

* complete where home bred sheep are being tagged or when bought in sheep are upgraded to breeding animals

** complete only where tags have been lost, or where bought in sheep are being upgraded to breeding animals

Event Codes

T = Tagging of sheep

R = Replacements

P = Purchase/ movement onto holding

D = Deaths

S = Sales/ movements off holding

Instructions and examples on how to complete your flock register are provided as part of the register.

E.5 Additional Requirements for Dealers

The NSIS requirements in relation to identification (tagging), flock registers, movement documentation, census etc. as set out in this booklet, and which apply to flock owners/keepers apply equally to sheep dealers. There are however additional statutory requirements which dealers must comply with the primary obligation being that dealers must be registered as a dealer with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. There are also limitations as to where a dealer can bring sheep that they have purchased or received and the requirements in relation to dispatch/documents can also differ slightly depending on the circumstance. The following sections of this booklet are only intended to give an overview of the requirements for dealers, and it is the responsibility of dealers to ensure that they comply with the requirements of the National Sheep Identification System and the European Communities (Approval and Registration of Dealers of Ovine Animals) Regulations 2008 (S.I.100 of 2008).

E 5.1 Approval and Registration of Dealers

Under the European Communities (Approval and Registration of Dealers of Ovine Animals) Regulations 2008 (S.I. 100 of 2008) all dealers engaged in the buying and selling of sheep must be registered. In the case of a flock keeper who deals in sheep a “dealer” is defined as a person who purchases and sells to another person within a period of 29 days. A person who buys and resells less than 100 sheep within 29 days in any 12 month period will be considered to be excluded from the requirements to be approved as a dealer.

All dealers engaged must be approved and registered by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. It is not permitted for a person to buy/acquire/source an animal from or sell/supply/dispose of an animal to a dealer unless the dealer is approved, registered and in possession of a current approval number under the aforementioned legislation. In addition if a dealer is assembling/holding animals, he/she must have premises, which have been approved for that specific purpose. However, the following exemptions apply:

- 'A person who resides outside the State, who buys animals in the State on his or her own account
- 'A person, who selects or bids for animals (on a commission or per head basis) exclusively on behalf of others (e.g. dealers, factories, or private individuals) but who does not buy and pay for the animals, is excluded from the definition of a dealer and therefore is not required to be approved as a dealer.

The legislation requires those who register as dealers to comply with arrangements relating to the welfare and transport of animals, standards and the upkeep of premises, keeping of records and compliance with animal notification and disease testing procedures. Each dealer must make a written application for approval and registration as a dealer in respect of each premises used for his/her dealing operations.

E5.2 Dealers — Buying and Reselling an Animal

A dealer who buys an animal and has a registered dealer's premises must transport the animal directly from the first premises where he or she bought the animal directly to (a) his or her registered dealer's premises, or (b) the permitted premises to where it is being resold or relocated.

A dealer who buys an animal and does not have a registered dealer's premises must arrange to transport the animal directly from the first premises to the permitted premises to where it is being resold or relocated.

A person shall not knowingly buy an animal from a dealer, or sell an animal to a dealer, unless the dealer is approved.

A dealer shall not buy or resell an animal unless it comes from or is going to a permitted premises that has an official identification number and is not subject to movement restrictions specified in Community or national legislation and is correctly identified with ear tags in accordance with the national sheep Identification System.

E5.3 National Sheep Identification System (NSIS) Record Keeping and Documentation Requirements for Sheep Dealers

Under the NSIS all sheep keepers including dealers must maintain a flock register in which every purchase and sale of sheep is recorded. In most cases each record will comprise the date of the purchase/sale, the number of sheep, the relevant dispatch document serial number and also the breed and or genotype of the sheep if known. All records including copies of the relevant dispatch documents and the flock register must be retained for a minimum period of 3 years. The following contains further details of the dispatch document requirements for purchases and sales involving dealers.

SHEEP PURCHASED BY DEALER AND SOLD TO FACTORY

Straight to Factory – No overnight or alighting on dealers premises

Dealer buys sheep from a number of different flocks of origin.

Dealer is presented with dispatch documents from each holding of origin giving details of sheep tag numbers and number of sheep etc.

Sheep are not kept overnight and are transported by the dealer directly to the factory from the holding(s) of origin within 24 hours

Dealer retains middle (pink) copy of dispatch document and present top (white) copy to factory.

Dealer associates the dispatch document copies with his flock register using the dispatch doc serial number as reference.

Factory record the animals as separate batches as per the dispatch docs.

Sheep retained overnight or longer before being taken to the Factory.

Dealer buys sheep from a number of different flocks.

Dealer is presented with dispatch documents from each holding giving details of sheep tag numbers and number of sheep etc.

Sheep are kept overnight or longer at the premises of the dealer.

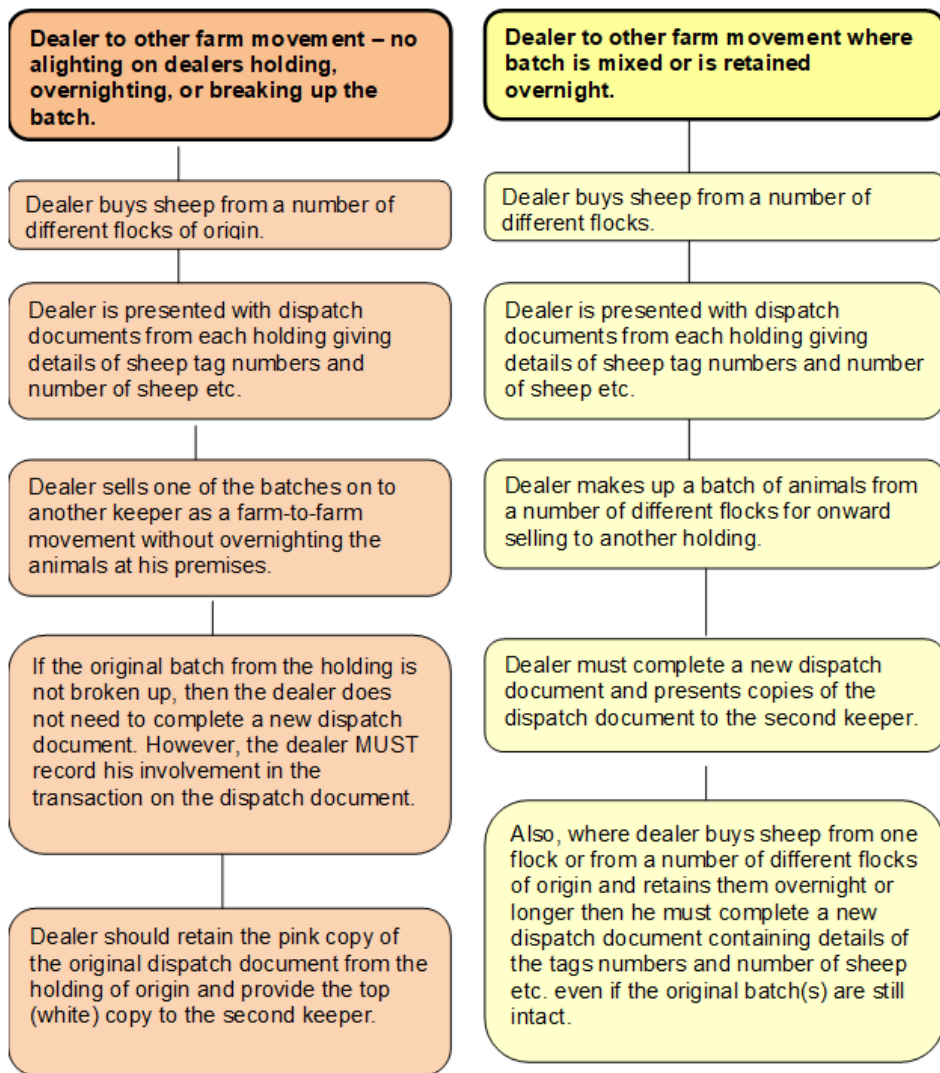
Dealer associates the copies of dispatch documents from the holdings with this flock register using the dispatch doc serial

Very important for the dealer to keep copies of the dispatch documents in chronological order because in the event of a disease outbreak it is these copies that will provide the level of traceability required.

When sending any batches of animals to the factory the dealer must complete his own personalised dispatch document.

Dealer associates the copies of dispatch documents from the holdings with this flock register using the dispatch doc serial

SHEEP PURCHASED BY DEALER FROM A FARM, AND SOLD TO ANOTHER FARM



E.6 Inspections

The National Sheep Identification System (NSIS) is designed to provide a robust traceability system for sheep and to ensure the safety of all sheep meat produced in Ireland. In this regard, owners and keepers are reminded of the importance of maintaining accurate records and in ensuring proper identification of all sheep in their care.

Under the requirements of the NSIS keepers must:

1. ensure that all sheep moving in to or out of their holding from 1st June 2019 are properly electronically identified.
2. fully and accurately complete and subsequently retain copies of all dispatch/movement documents in relation to all sheep moved on or off the holding.
3. maintain an accurate flock register; and
4. complete and return an accurate annual sheep census on time, recording the Census result in the flock register

All these records must be retained by you for a period of at least three years and it may also be necessary to produce them during the course of inspections.

Animal Identification and Registration (IDR) inspections are generally announced in advance and all sheep in the flock must be penned and available for inspection within 48 hours of the inspection notice. Failure to have all sheep penned and available for inspection can lead to DAFM sanction, as can failure to retain accurate records and submit a sheep census. It is also important for you to notify your local DAFM office within 7 days when you purchase sheep directly from another flock keeper (not through a mart) as compliance with this requirement will also be examined during inspections. Alternatively, these movements may be submitted through the 'AIM Services' app. Further information and details of how to notify farm to farm movements are included in section E.2 of this booklet.

It should be noted that where you avail of an approved CPR (see section D above) to provide you with a printed list of tag numbers for sheep that are electronically tagged and presented at a CPR, you will not in general be held responsible or penalised for inaccuracies due to electronic tags which cannot be scanned provided all other elements of your documentation are in order and correspond with the total number of sheep in the lot.

Section F – Dead Sheep and Movements to Knackeries

F.1 Dead Sheep

Where an animal dies on a holding, it should be sent to a knackery accompanied by a completed dispatch document from the holding where it died or by a form provided for this purpose by the knackery.

The death of the animal should be recorded in the flock register by using the code “D” and inserting the month and year of death and the tag number where applicable. Where an animal has not yet been tagged, it is sufficient to record the death of an animal by inserting the month and year of death of the animal.

F.2 Other Movements to a Knackery

Live but sick/dying animals sent to a knackery must be tagged in accordance with the rules set out above and also accompanied by a properly completed dispatch document.

Section G – Commonages

G.1 Optional Tagging or Marking

With effect from 1st June 2019, all sheep moved on to a commonage from a previous holding must have two forms of identification - i.e. either a full EID tag set or and electronic bolus set. Where a keeper wishes to distinguish his/ her sheep from other animals on the commonage, a number of measures can be taken including:

1. Writing their own flock number in permanent marker on the blank parts of the NSIS tags to show that it is his/her animal.
2. Tag the sheep with a third management tag
3. Spray the sheep with new markings

Section H – Imports and Exports

H.1 Imports

Sheep imported **from an EU Member State and from Northern Ireland** must, on arrival into Ireland, already be electronically identified with a full EID tag set or an electronic bolus set and must not be re-tagged on arrival at the new holding.

Sheep imported **from outside the EU (including Great Britain) from 19th September 2022** must be identified as follows

1. where imported for slaughter, the sheep must retain the identification tags applied in the country of their birth. They must be transported directly and without delay to an approved slaughterhouse where they must be slaughtered within 5 days of their arrival in the EU; and
2. where kept on a holding, the sheep must retain the tags applied in the country of their birth **and must also be identified with approved NSIS tags** (either an EID tag set or a bolus set) within 20 days of arrival, identifying the new holding of destination. These sheep will be identified with 2 tags in each ear and must stay on the holding of first arrival for a minimum of 30 days.

Where 2 tags in each ear could cause welfare concerns in particular breeds, please contact DAFM's AIM Division at 01 5058723 for further instruction.

Details of all imported sheep must to be recorded in the sheep herd register. This includes correlating the individual tag numbers assigned to each animal in the country of its birth with its new NSIS tag numbers. All associated movement documentation must also be recorded in the flock register.

Import queries should be referred to your DAFM Regional Veterinary Office.

H.2 Mechanism for Recording the Movements of Sheep Imported into Holdings in Ireland from 3rd Countries (including Great Britain)

This instruction applies to the recording of all onward movements of sheep that have been imported from 3rd countries – including movements to other farms, to marts and to slaughter.

Sheep tagged in accordance with point (2) above must:

- (a) be separated from other sheep upon movement - i.e. they must be presented as a separate batch; and
- (b) be accompanied by a dispatch document listing the NSIS tags numbers **AND** the correlating tag numbers of the country of origin.

Standard dispatch documents should be used where the NSIS tag number should be recorded in the left column (lines 1-17) with the corresponding 3rd country identification numbers recorded in the same line in the right column (lines 18-34).

Multiple dispatch documents can be used if necessary.

HOW TO COMPLETE DISPATCH DOCUMENT

It is important that animals imported from 3rd countries can be distinguished from animals born on the island of Ireland. Ensuring traceability throughout the foodchain means individual animal correlation is necessary.

Insert NSIS tag numbers on this side



White Copy - PURCHASER Pink Copy - MART (or send to Dept if move is direct from FARM to FARM) Yellow Copy - RETAIN FOR YOUR RECORDS	
Please enter the Individual TAG NUMBERS of sheep leaving the holding here or alternatively you may attach a list of the tag numbers on an approved continuation sheet	
1	18
2	19
3	20
4	21
5	22
6	23
7	24
8	25
9	26
10	27
11	28
12	29
13	30
14	31
15	32
16	33
17	34

Insert corresponding 3rd country tag number on this side



H.3 Exports

All sheep destined for live export must be identified with an electronic tag set or bolus set prior to leaving the holding of origin.

Note: In addition to the ID requirements, importers and exporters should satisfy themselves that they are also in compliance with all relevant animal health conditions in relation to live trade.

Please contact Import Controls for further information.

Section I – Annual Sheep Census

I.1 Census

Under Regulation (EU) 2016/429 all sheep keepers must carry out an annual inventory of their sheep and return this number to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. The Department normally carries out the annual sheep census each December and a census form together with pre-addressed return envelope is posted to all keepers so that they can submit their sheep numbers to the Department.

Sheep census returns can also be returned online via agfood.ie. When using this facility, keepers also have access to the returns made by them in previous years and can amend their current return for a period, where the need arises.

Before returning the census figure to the Department, the number of sheep declared in the census form must also be recorded in the keeper's flock register.

Keepers who have no sheep at the time of the census but who are still involved in sheep farming must still submit a census by submitting a nil return either by post or online. Failure to do so may result in the keeper's designator being made dormant. This would prevent them from ordering sheep tags and dispatch/movement books.

Annual Census returns must reach the Department by a designated closing date, notified to keepers on the census form. It is very important for all sheep keepers that this deadline is adhered to as eligibility to certain DAFM Schemes is determined by the date of DAFM's receipt of the annual census data. The annual sheep census is an integral part of the National Sheep Identification System and failure to submit a census form in time or the submission of an inaccurate census can render a farmer liable to prosecution, can lead to penalties as a result of inspections and can also hamper claims made under certain schemes.

Section J – How to Order Dispatch / Movement Documents, Tags and Flock Register

J.1 How to Order Tags and /or Boluses

Tags or boluses can be ordered from any approved tag or bolus supplier. A list of approved tag/bolus suppliers is at Annex 1 and on <https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/93966/3861be05-a5e3-44a7-9f3c-c4760f2e8034.pdf#page=1>. Alternatively, you can call 01-5058723 to obtain details of tag suppliers. Flock owners who wish to purchase more than 500 tags per year may be required to contact Sheep ID & Movement Section of DAFM (01-5058723) to apply to have their tag threshold increased to the required amount. In order to have a sheep tag threshold increased, flock owners must be able to demonstrate that the number of tags being sought is reasonable and is based on the size of flock being managed or other relevant criteria.

J.2. How to Order Dispatch / Movement Documents

All newly registered sheep farmers will automatically receive a personalised book of dispatch/movement documents approximately 2 to 3 weeks after they have registered. To order additional supplies of dispatch/movement documents, keepers should contact their local Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Regional Office. A list of local offices is available at Annex 2 and on the DAFM website at [gov.ie - Contact the Department \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie).

J.3 How to Order a New Flock Register

A flock register is also automatically issued to all newly registered sheep farmers. To order additional supplies of flock registers, keepers should contact their local Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine Office. A list of local offices is available on [gov.ie - Contact the Department \(www.gov.ie\)](http://www.gov.ie). Alternatively contact **Sheep ID Section** on **01-5058723** or **email sheepid@agriculture.gov.ie**

Section K – AIM Services Sheep Farm to Farm App

K.1 Installation and Login Guides

Click on <https://AIMSPortal.agriculture.gov.ie> or scan the below QR Code



Instruction on how to install the app onto your device and how to use the app can be found at gov.ie - [Animal Identification & Movement \(AIM\) \(www.gov.ie\)](http://gov.ie)

Any questions or queries on the App can be referred to sheepid@agriculture.gov.ie or telephone 01-5058723.

Section L – Inspections

L. 1 Identification and Registration (IDR) Inspections

From 2023, breaches found at DAFM IDR inspections for sheep may result in the herd/flock being restricted until the herd keeper rectifies **all** the breaches that were found. These must be resolved to the Department's satisfaction within 10 days of AIM Division notifying the owner of the findings of the inspection. Failure to rectify within the required timeframe may lead to a Fixed Payment Notice (FPN) being issued. Failure to pay a FPN may lead to prosecution.

Annex 1

List of Companies Approved to Supply Tags under the National Sheep Identification System (NSIS)	
Company	Contact Details
Agrihealth Ltd. Clones Road Monaghan Co. Monaghan	Tel: 1890-515151 or 047-71800 Fax: 047-74190 email: eartags@agrihealth.ie Web: www.agrihealth.ie
Co-Operative Animal Health Ltd Tullow Industrial Estate Tullow Co. Carlow	Tel: 059-9151251 Fax: 059- 9151856 email: orders@cahg.ie Web: www.cahl.ie
Cormac Tagging 15 MG Business Park, Tuam Co. Galway	Tel: 093-52385 Fax: 093- 25044 email: info@cormactagging.ie Web: www.cormactagging.ie
Datamars Agri Unit 2 Little Island Industrial Estate Little Island Cork T45 FK66	Tel: 01 4594664 Fax: 01 4642408 email: info@datamars.ie Web: www.datamars.ie
Mullinahone Co-Op Mullinahone Thurles Co. Tipperary E41 YV05	Tel: 052-9153102 Fax: 052- 9153512 email: eurotags@mull-coop.ie Web: www.mullinahonecoop.ie
Quicktag 7A Churchfield Road Ballycastle Antrim BT54 6PJ, Northern Ireland	Tel: 0044 1765 689541 Fax: 0044 1765 689851 email: info@quicktag.co.uk
Ritchey Tagg plc Fearby Road Masham, Ripon North Yorkshire HG4 4ES, England	Tel: 0044 1765-689541 Fax: 0044 1765-689851 email: linda.simms@ritchey.co.uk Web: www.ritchey-id.com
Shearwell Data Ltd. Putham Farm Wheddon Cross, Minehead Somerset TA24 7AS UK	Tel: 0044 1643-841611 Fax: 0044 1643 841628 email: sales@shearwell.co.uk Web: www.shearwell.co.uk

Annex 2

List of DAFM Regional Offices

Herd Number and County		Address	Phone Number
B R T S X	Cavan Monaghan Roscommon Offaly Westmeath	Government Offices, Farnham Street, Cavan	0494368200
H D	Kerry Cork	Hibernian House, 80 South Mall, Cork	021 4851400
E	Donegal	Meeting House Street, Raphoe, Co. Donegal	074 9173600 / 074 913601
A J W Y V Z101 - Z148	Carlow Kilkenny Waterford Wexford Tipperary Wicklow East	Local Office Administration Unit, Old Knockmay Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois	051 312300
C I F K M Z202 - Z226	Clare Kildare Dublin Laois Limerick Wicklow West	Poplar House, Poplar Square, Naas, Co. Kildare	045 873035
L N U	Leitrim Longford Sligo	Derryhallagh Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim.	071-9682000
O Q	Louth Meath	Government Offices, Athlumney, Kilcarn, Navan, Co. Meath.	046 9079030
G P	Galway Mayo	Michael Davitt House, Castlebar, Co. Mayo.	094-9035300

Notes

An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Bia agus Mara
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine

**Campas Bhacastúin, Ascaill Steach Cuimne, Cill Droichid,
Co. Chill Dara. W23 X3PH**
Backweston Campus, Stacumny Lane, Celbridge,
Co. Kildare W23 X3PH

Phone: 01 505 8723

Email: sheepid@agriculture.gov.ie