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Keeping farmed animals – guidance

Cattle identification, registration and movement

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This replaces



Information about keeping cattle: tagging, passports and registration, notification of movement and deaths, records, inspections and welfare

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Introduction

Cattle identification and traceability are important for disease control and also for maintaining consumer confidence in farm produce. There are standards and rules for identifying and controlling cattle movement to prevent and trace the spread of disease.

This guide gives you information about what to do after you have moved cattle on to your holding. It explains tagging, passports and registration, notification of new movements and deaths. It also covers on-farm records and inspections as well as cattle welfare during transport and while at market. You will also find information on where to get further advice and support.

New keepers

New keepers of cattle, pigs, sheep and goats must register for a County Parish Holding (CPH) number phoning the Rural Payments Agency on 0345 603 7777.

Cattle identification and cross compliance

To qualify for full payment under the Single Payment Scheme (SPS) and other direct payments - eg the Environmental Stewardship schemes - you must meet all relevant cross compliance requirements. These requirements are split into two types:

- Statutory Management Requirements (SMRs)
- Requirements to keep your land in Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition (GAEC)

SMRs require farmers to protect habitats and wildlife, manage their soil and water, control chemical use and prevent animal disease. They also specify rules on animal health, welfare and identification.

Cattle identification and registration

The aim of this SMR is to maintain a system for the identification and registration of cattle to help with their traceability, in particular in the event of a disease outbreak. It applies to you if you keep cattle.

You must not remove or replace ear tags without permission from the British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS) unless they are lost or illegible. You must replace lost or illegible tags, and you must not alter, obliterate or deface an ear tag or alter or deface a cattle passport.

- [Cattle identification and registration \(SMR 7\)](#) 

Tagging your cattle

You must ensure that all cattle born on or after 1 January 1998 have an official ear tag in each ear. This is known as 'double tagging'. Each tag must show the same unique number for that animal.

There are two types of ear tag - primary and secondary. The main ear tag, known as the primary ear tag, is a yellow, plastic, two-piece ear tag.

Since 1 January 2000, ear tag numbers must have a specific numeric format. They contain the crown logo, country code, herdmark, individual animal number and check digit. Secondary ear tags can be printed to allow space for management information. This information can include details relevant to a particular animal, such as visual identification, its name or a different unique number. This is useful so you don't need to check that the herd mark and single number check digit match the animal's number, eg for medication. There is no minimum size requirement for secondary tags, so button or metal tags may be used.

You must fit ear tags within 20 days of an animal's birth, with the exception of dairy cattle, which must have at least one tag fitted within 36 hours of birth.

Tagging imported cattle

You must handle imported cattle as follows:

- if they are from another EU member state, they will already be double tagged so you do not need to retag them unless they lose an ear tag
- if they are from outside the EU, you must tag each animal within 20 days of it passing the veterinary checks

All your cattle must be tagged before they leave the holding where they were born. You may also add a barcode, but this isn't required in the UK. Some EU member states have made a bar code mandatory but you can still export cattle without the barcode.

You can order ear tags from suppliers. [Read a list of ear tag suppliers on the RPA website](#) .

Although a microchip is not part of the official requirements, you can use a microchip in the secondary tag to allow electronic identification of the animal.

[Livestock movements, identification and tracing: Cattle - Information for EU Member States](#) (PDF, 573KB, 10 pages)

Cattle passports and registration

Cattle born in or imported into Great Britain since 1 July 1996 must have a cattle passport. This identifies them and their movements and must remain with them throughout their lives.

Single page passports (CPP52) are issued by the BCMS. The BCMS also runs the Cattle Tracing System (CTS) database, and is responsible for:

- maintaining a register of births, deaths and imports of cattle used for animal health and subsidy control purposes
- issuing cattle passports
- recording individual cattle whereabouts
- operating a dedicated helpline
- providing online services

The cattle passports include:

- details of the animal
- details of where it has been throughout its life
- details of the animal's death

The chequebook-style passport (CPP13) continues for animals born or imported from 28 September 1998 until BCMS started issuing single page passports on 1 August 2011 which should accompany the animal when it moves. These passports also include movement cards which can be sent in when an animal moves on or off a holding if the movement is not notified electronically.

The old style green cattle passport continues for animals registered between 1 July 1996 and 28 September 1998. These cattle were also issued with Certificates of CTS Registration (CHR3) and both their passports and the CHR3 should accompany them whenever they move. Cattle born before 1 July 1996 were issued with a Certificate of Registration (CHR3) only which should accompany the animal when it moves.

How to apply for cattle passports

You must make passport applications within 27 days from the animal's birth. Any application received at BCMS more than 27 days after the birth of a calf will be refused and a Notice of Registration document issued. You may be able to appeal against refusal of a passport under certain exceptional circumstances.

Applications received with missing or invalid information will be issued with a Notice of Registration document 56 days after receipt of the application if full valid information is not received before this time. If subsequent valid information is provided a passport may be issued if the Notice of Registration is returned.

You can apply to the BCMS for your cattle passports using the following methods:

- [CTS Online](#) - this is a free, interactive website that is available to all registered cattle keepers in Great Britain.
- CTS Web Services is a facility that is used by a range of farm software packages to feed data directly into CTS. CTS Online and CTS Web Services are two distinct options - one is free, the other requires the user to purchase software from a third party supplier. Both are more reliable than email, as information is sent more securely - with fewer mistakes - due to the early detection feature. Successful transactions will always receive a receipt which will be needed for any helpline queries. [There is a list of suppliers and software packages on the BCMS pages of the RPA website.](#) 
- The CTS Self Service line is an automated telephone line. You can call the CTS Self Service line on 0345 011 1212.
- The pre-printed application form. (If you apply for 85% or more of your passports using an electronic method you will not automatically receive the application forms).

[Read information about how to apply for cattle passports on the BCMS CTS Online website](#) .

Passports for imported cattle

For imports from other EU member states, you must send the animal's EU passports, Export Health Certificate and completed import application form (CPP16) to BCMS within 15 days of the animal's arrival at your holding.

For imports from outside the EU - ie from third countries - you must use form CPP16 to apply for a passport within 15 days of having tagged the animal. You must have tagged it within 20 days of its passing the veterinary checks, or before the animal leaves the holding.

When an animal dies on your holding

If an animal dies on your farm, you must either report the death electronically or

complete the death details section of the passport. In either case you must still return the animal's passport to the BCMS within seven days in all cases.

You are not allowed to bury or burn carcasses (other than using an approved incinerator) on your holding. In Great Britain, the only exceptions to the ban are for remote areas in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland, the Scilly Isles and Lundy Island.

If the animal is over 48 months old you must send it to an approved sampling site so that a brainstem sample can be taken for bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) testing.

If for any reason the animal has not been registered, it must still be sent for BSE testing. You can use your local fallen stock collector, or join the National Fallen Stock Scheme run by the National Fallen Stock Company (NFSCo). For more information, call the NFSCo Helpline on 0345 054 8888.

Passport replacements

Cattle passports are valuable documents and should be kept securely. If a passport has been lost, damaged or stolen, you must apply for a replacement from the BCMS within 14 days of becoming aware that the passport is missing. A replacement will be issued providing the animal's movement history can be traced. There is a charge for this service. The charge is £20.

Notification of cattle movements and deaths

If you keep cattle, you will need to follow certain rules on identifying and moving your animals. European and UK law requires notification of when cattle are moved both on and off your farm - known as 'on' and 'off' movements.

Notification of cattle movement

Whenever you move cattle, you must follow the conditions of the [General licence for the movement of cattle](#).

Once you move cattle or other animals on to your holding, no other animals are allowed to move on or off it for six days. This standstill period applies to all sheep, cattle, and goats. Pigs are subject to a 20 day standstill period. However, you can apply for an exemption to the standstill rule if your animals have been attending a show.

When an animal goes to a show, you need to report its movements when it leaves and returns to the farm after the show. The show secretary should report the on and off movements for the showground.

You're legally obliged to notify the BCMS of movements of cattle on or off your holding within three days of the event and within seven days for the death of an animal. You can do this by:

- using [CTS Online](#)
- using the CTS Self Service Line
- using a farm software package linked to CTS Web Services
- using the tear-out movement cards in the animal's chequebook-style passport

The details must also be recorded in the movement summary section of the passport.

Before any movement, you will need to inspect cattle for signs of foot and mouth disease. If you find any evidence of the disease, you must immediately notify your local [Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency \(AHVLA\) office](#) .

If you find any evidence of disease, your licence will be cancelled, and you will not be allowed to move any animals on or off the premises.

Notification of cattle deaths

You must notify the BCMS of any cattle deaths on your holding within seven days by either reporting the death electronically or completing the death detail section of the passport, in either case the passport must be returned to the BCMS within seven days of the death. Animals over 48 months old, which die on your farm, must be sent for BSE testing. The TSE cut off slip from the single page passport or a movement card from the cheque-book style passport should be placed in a clear plastic bag and left with the carcass. For further information on the rules and regulations for the death of farm animals, see the guide on [fallen stock](#).

The occupier of a slaughterhouse must notify the death of animals slaughtered on their premises by either reporting the death electronically or completing the death details section of the passport and sending it to BCMS.

If an animal is slaughtered outside a slaughterhouse, but sent to one for dressing, the keeper must either report the death electronically or complete the death details section of the passport. The passport should be sent with the animal to the slaughterhouse. The occupier of the slaughterhouse must notify the death by returning the passport to BCMS. For more information, see the guide on [farmed animal welfare at slaughter](#).

If an animal does not have a cattle passport, the keeper must notify its death to BCMS in writing within seven days, and include the ear tag number, the date of death, and the

holding on which it died.

For more information on dealing with fallen stock, see the guide on [fallen stock](#).

Cattle welfare in transport

When moving animals, you must transport them in a way that won't cause them injury or unnecessary suffering.

Whilst EU rules apply to all live, vertebrate animals transported for economic reasons, more stringent elements apply to the transport of farm livestock, such as cattle.

When transporting livestock, you should:

- plan journeys thoroughly and keep the duration to a minimum
- ensure the animals are fit to travel and check them regularly
- ensure vehicle loading and unloading facilities are constructed and maintained to avoid injury and suffering
- ensure those handling animals are competent and don't use violence or any methods likely to cause fear, injury or suffering
- provide sufficient floor space and height allowance
- provide water, feed and rest as needed

For more information, see the guide on [farmed animal welfare during transportation](#).

Fitness for travel

It's illegal to transport an animal that's considered unfit for travel. This includes:

- new-born mammals where the navel has not completely healed
- heavily pregnant females - where more than 90% of the expected gestation period has passed
- females who have given birth during the previous seven days
- sick or injured animals where moving them would cause additional suffering - unless instructed by a vet

[Download the Defra's guidance on whether animals are fit to travel from the Agricultural Document Library \(ADLib\) website \(PDF, 247K\)](#) .

Enforcement

Local authorities have primary responsibility for enforcing the rules to protect animals during transportation. Veterinary inspectors from AHVLA also have powers to ensure transporters are following the rules.

Defra collects information about any transporters caught breaking the law from local authorities, AHVLA and authorities abroad. This information is used when deciding whether to grant, suspend or cancel transporter authorisation.

Welfare at market and shows

There is general and specific legislation covering the welfare of animals at markets and shows - in particular Welfare of Animals at Markets Order 1990.

These specify that owners and keepers must provide animals with a suitable environment, good diet, the opportunity to 'act normally', sufficient housing, and protection from pain, injury, suffering and disease.

All animal owners are also responsible for the health and welfare of their animals and therefore need to understand and provide for their physical and welfare needs. They have a duty of care towards the animal and must recognise the signs of illness or disease. They also have a responsibility to be vigilant, report any suspicion of disease and maintain good disease prevention and control practice, including compliance with regulations.

For more information, see the guide on [farmed animal welfare at shows and markets](#).

- [Code of recommendations for the welfare of livestock: Cattle](#)
- [General licence for the movement of cattle](#)

Keeping on-farm records for cattle

According to European law, you must keep up-to-date herd records. These records should contain the following for every animal:

- ear tag number
- date of birth
- breed and sex
- dam ear tag number
- movements on and off your holding
- details of where it's moved from and to
- date of death

Animals born since 1 January 1998 must retain the same number throughout their lives.

You will also need to update these records within the following deadlines:

- 36 hours for movement on or off a holding
- seven days for the birth of a dairy animal
- thirty days for the birth of a non dairy animal

- seven days for recording death
- 36 hours for replacing ear tags (only if the ear tag number has been changed)

These records can be paper-based or electronic. [Herd record for bovine animals](#) (PDF, 14.8KB, 1 page)

Cattle farm inspections

On-the-spot checks are referred to as Cattle Identification Inspections (CIIs). CIIs are carried out to ensure compliance with all cattle identification and registration requirements.

In each EU member state, 3% of registered holdings are inspected annually. The holdings are selected by risk analysis, and the inspections should be unannounced, though you may get up to 48 hours' notice.

You will be responsible for presenting all your animals, their passports and records on the holding for physical inspection. You will also need to provide suitable handling facilities and to assist with herding animals for inspection. Refusing or obstructing an inspection is an offence. At the end of your inspection, the inspector will ask you to sign a report form and offer you the opportunity to comment. A copy of this form will then be handed to you.

The inspector will specifically check that:

- your farm records show which animals are present on the holding or have been on the holding
- births, movements and deaths have been correctly recorded
- all animals are correctly tagged, and match the animal's passport
- all passports are present and correct
- deadlines for identifying cattle and keeping records have been met
- all passports for animals no longer on the holding have been passed on to the new keeper or returned to the BCMS

How long does the inspection take?

This depends on the size of your holding, the number of cattle involved and the quality of your record keeping. Records that are set out clearly and accurately will significantly reduce inspection time.

If errors are found during the inspection a movement restriction may be imposed on some or all of the cattle.

Penalties

Defra may prosecute keepers who they believe are deliberately breaking the cattle identification rules.

Failure to comply with the cattle identification rules may also affect claims made under the SPS.

The standing movements regime

In the aftermath of the 2001 outbreak of foot and mouth disease, Defra introduced standing restrictions on the movements of livestock (cattle, sheep, goats and pigs). Whenever cattle, sheep, goats or pigs are moved onto a farm, no cattle, sheep or goats may move off for a period of six days. Pigs have to remain under standstill for 6 days where cattle, sheep and goats have been moved on to a holding. Where pigs have moved on to a farm, existing pigs must remain under standstill for 20 days. This is a disease dampening measure designed to slow down the rate of spread of undetected disease and thus reduce the size (and hence the cost) of disease outbreaks. Movements of animals are monitored through the Animal Movements Licensing System (AMLS) which is managed by the British Cattle Movement Service (BCMS). The Disease Control (England) Order 2003 (as amended) is the domestic legislation setting out the law behind the regime.

Legislation

The requirements on cattle identification, registration and tracing are governed by several pieces of EU legislation.

Regulation made by the European Parliament and Council

[Regulation \(EC\) No 1760/00](#)  establishing a system for the identification and registration of bovine animals and regarding the labelling of beef and beef products and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 820/97.

Regulation made by the European Commission giving detailed rules

[Regulation \(EC\) No 911/2004](#)  laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1760/00 as regards eartags, holding registers and passports in the framework of the system for the identification and registration of bovine animals.

[Regulation \(EC\) No 1082/2003](#)  as amended by [Regulation \(EC\) 1034/2010](#)  laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1760/00 as regards the minimum level of controls to be carried out in the framework of the system for the identification and registration of bovine animals. This Regulation

specifies the need for the competent authority to carry out on the spot inspections of GB cattle holdings. This has been amended by [Regulation \(EC\) No 1034/2010](#) which has set the level at 3% of holdings to be inspected.

[Regulation \(EC\) No 494/98](#) as amended by [Regulation \(EC\) No 1053/2010](#) laying down detailed rules for the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) No 1760/00 as regards the application of minimum administrative sanctions in the framework of the system for the identification and registration of bovine animals. This Regulation sets down the sanctions to be applied to holdings not complying with the requirements of Regulation (EC) No 1760/00, which includes restrictions on movements of cattle from the holding.

Commission [Regulation \(EC\) No 644/2005](#) laying down rules for a special identification system for bovine animals recognised by the competent authority as being kept for cultural and historical purposes on premises approved for that purpose by the competent authority.

Commission [Regulation \(EC\) No 509/1999](#) concerning an extension of the maximum period laid down for the application of ear-tags to bison.

The European Commission published a proposed regulation on 31 August 2011 which, if adopted, would introduce official electronic identification methods for cattle and abolish cattle passports for domestic trade. The proposed regulation is unlikely to be adopted before January 2014.

European Law is enforced by the domestic Cattle Identification Regulations which are made separately in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The EU requirements are enforced in England through:

- [The Cattle Identification Regulations 2007](#)
- [The Cattle Identification \(Amendment\) Regulations 2007](#)
- [The Cattle Identification \(Amendment\) Regulations 2013](#)

Scottish cattle identification legislation is available on the [Scottish Government website](#). Welsh cattle identification legislation is available on the [Welsh Assembly Government website](#).

Further information

[Cattle passport application guidance on the BCMS's CTS Online website](#)

[Cattle Keeper's Handbook on the RPA website](#)

[Download information about SMR 7 - Cattle identification and registration from the RPA website](#)

[General licence for the movement of cattle](#)

[Code of recommendations for the welfare of livestock: Cattle](#)

[Herd record for bovine animals](#) (PDF, 14.8KB, 1 page)

[Breed code list of bovine animals](#) (PDF, 168KB, 3 pages)

[Livestock movements, identification and tracing: Cattle - Information for EU Member States](#) (PDF, 573KB, 10 pages)

[Guidance for Local Authorities on the licensing of movements of livestock](#)

Cross Compliance Helpline

0345 345 1302

Defra Livestock Identification Helpline

0345 050 9876

BCMS Helpline

0345 050 1234

RPA Customer Service Centre

0345 603 7777

Defra Helpline

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