

Consultation on the implementation of Electronic Identification for Sheep and individual recording for Sheep and Goats

Background

Ritchey is a leading independent British manufacturer, distributor and supplier of a wide range of animal husbandry products in the UK, Republic of Ireland and key export markets worldwide.

Originally known as Ritchey Tagg Ltd, the company was formed in 1972 to specialise in the manufacturing and supply of ear tags and animal identification products. Since that time the product portfolio has grown considerably to meet the ever changing needs of farmers and trading customers.

Ritchey now offers a range of products to span calving, lambing and farrowing, footcare, showing and electronic weighing. Among our many well known brands are Dalesman™ and Snapp tags, Super Sprayline, Tru-Test weighing equipment, Hooftrat Plus™ and Oster grooming products.

As a long-established manufacturer and supplier of premium quality livestock products to agricultural retailers for onward sale to farmers, Ritchey is a strong brand within the farming and veterinary communities.

Question 1

Do you agree that Defra should implement the slaughter derogation to its fullest extent, which is the least burdensome and lowest cost option overall. If you do not agree please explain why and identify your preferred option?

Ritchey supports this as it reduces the cost to industry but more particularly favours Option 4 – “Slaughter derogation using a batch tag but providing for an official Electronic Slaughter Tag as an alternative”. As we see it, this Option offers a number of benefits:

- Leaves the choice up to the keeper and thus covers individual keeper’s needs
- Provides for an upgrade from ‘feeder’ to ‘breeder’, i.e. in the event that a keeper wishes to retain the lamb as a breeding ewe rather than send it to slaughter, they will be able to do so

- May resolve potential issues of cross-border trade if the devolved Administrations choose to implement EID across the entire flock

However, clear and concise communication to/education of keepers will be essential in advising them of the best method to adopt for their specific needs.

Question 2

Do you agree that the slaughter tag should not include an individual number because of the increased recording burden this would impose on keepers throughout the chain?

- Ritchey supports anything that reduces the burden on keepers.

Question 3

Do you agree that we maintain the use of the slaughter derogation for goats unaltered?

- We do not have a view on this.

Question 4

Do you agree the proposed simplified replacement rules? If not please explain why and what your proposals are.

- Again, Ritchey supports anything that reduces the burden on keepers.

Question 5

Do you agree that we should not require cross referencing where different numbered replacements are applied on the holding of birth in respect of animals born before 31 December 2009 only? Or would you prefer to see replacements cross referenced as for animals born or identified after 31 December 2009 so that the rules are the same?

- We do not have a view on this.

Question 6

Do you agree that metal tags should not be removed because of potential welfare issues?

- We do not have a view on this.

Question 7

Do you agree that the use of injectable transponders should not be authorized until such time as public health issues have been addressed?

- This appears a sensible approach.

Question 8

Do you agree that where a bolus is applied the match up non electronic ear tag should be black with distinguishable letters and numbers?

- Yes.

Question 9

Do you agree that all electronic tags should be yellow in colour to ensure that electronic tags are distinguishable from non-electronic ones? If not, please explain why and offer an alternative solution.

- Yes. Ritchey completely supports the view that all electronic tags should be a single colour and that yellow is the most sensible option. In addition to the benefits for keepers and third party reporting, there are significant benefits in manufacturing, production planning and forecasting, and stock control.

Question 10

Do you agree that we should only authorize the use of electronic identifiers and reading equipment which conform to the minimum requirements and the Technical Guidelines?

- Yes.

Question 11

Do you agree that contingency arrangements should be put in place to ensure that normal trading practices are not disrupted in the event of power or equipment failure? If so, what do you think these arrangements might be?

- We do not have a view on this.

Question 12

Do you have any suggestions about how we could further reduce costs and burdens?

- The authorisation process for tags and transponders should be simplified so that the cost of the process can be dramatically reduced. The extremely high proposed cost of authorisation will inevitably be passed on to keepers and will also reduce the choice of products available to keepers.