



## Animal Disease Traceability Implementation FAQ

*Position: While Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association supports a traceability program that operates at the speed of commerce and allows for a rapid response in the event of an animal disease outbreak, the current USDA animal disease traceability plan does not fully align with our expectations for data handling and storage. The responsibility for data management should not lie within USDA. Instead, we advocate for a more decentralized approach, where the industry has a significant role in managing and protecting its own data.*

### Traceability Rule

**Q: When will the rule go into effect?**

A: The rule will affect cattle tagged beginning on or after Nov. 5, 2024.

**Q: What classes of cattle are affected?**

A: Cattle moving across state lines that are: sexually intact at or over 18 months of age; all female dairy cattle of any age; male dairy cattle born after Mar. 11, 2013; and all cattle for rodeo, recreation events, showing or exhibition.

**Q: Who is *not* affected by the rule?**

A: Any non-dairy cattle under 18 months of age, including any feeder cattle.

Any animal staying within state borders.

Any animal headed directly to slaughter, for example: feedlot steers or cull cows/bulls leaving one state, being transported directly to slaughter in another.

Special cases may apply for cattle on a single ranch or pastureland that contiguously crosses more than one state line – producers should confirm with both the states of origins and destination's animal health officials to confirm regulations.

**Q: What is required for affected cattle?**

A: USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) requires electronic identification (EID) tags that are both visually and electronically readable – the only tag that meets all criteria is the 840 series EID tag.

**Q: Is every state implementing the 2024 rule?**

A: Yes, every state is implementing the new 2024 animal disease traceability rule requiring EID tags. However, some states may have additional requirements for tagging and branding that are on top of and have existed before the 2024 rule and will continue to exist. Texas does not currently have additional tagging or branding requirements.

**Q: What's the difference between the rule implemented in 2013 versus 2024?**

A: Both the 2013 and 2024 rule affect the same classes of cattle. The 2013 rule allowed for various identification methods, including optional EID tags, focusing on establishing basic traceability. In contrast, the 2024 rule mandates the use of EID tags for interstate movement, leveraging advanced technology for more comprehensive disease control and greater efficiency of identification data gathering.

**Q: Who is grandfathered in?**

A: Cattle tagged with a metal clip tag (Bangs tag or silver "brite" NUES tag) before Nov. 5 will be grandfathered in for the animal's life. Any official animal identification for interstate movement after Nov. 5 must receive an 840 series EID tag for those falling under the rule's affected classes.

**Q: Are beef-on-dairy animals considered dairy animals?**

A: Yes, dairy-appearing, dairy-born or dairy-originating animals are affected by the ruling.

**Q: Are cull cows headed for slaughter exempt?**

A: Yes, they are exempt. If they are headed direct to slaughter, even if it is across state lines, they do not need to be tagged.

**Q: Who implemented this rule? Who helped make this decision?**

A: The rule is being implemented by USDA APHIS. In 2017, USDA APHIS began public outreach to gather input on a revised animal disease traceability program.

In January 2023, USDA APHIS published a proposed rule in the Federal Register and received more than 2,000 comments to consider before publishing the final ruling in May 2024 requiring electronic identification for interstate movement of affected classes.

**Q: What are the consequences of not tagging my cattle?**

A: Cattle could be restricted from crossing state lines without proper tagging and documentation.

**Q: Isn't EID tagging voluntary?**

A: As of Nov. 5, the new rule will make EID tags mandatory for affected classes of cattle moving across state lines. Not all cattle classes fall under the Nov. 5 rule, meaning it is not mandatory industry wide.

**[840 Tags](#)**

**Q: If I am buying or selling cattle that fall under the rule, what steps do I need to take to order tags?**

A: Before an official identification device can be ordered, a nationally unique premise identification number (PIN) or location identification number (LID) must be issued. A PIN or LID can be issued to veterinarians, auction markets or livestock owners. Once the PIN or LID is assigned, the requestor can order official identification.

**Q: Where can I get a premise identification number?**

A: In Texas, a PIN or LID is issued through the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC). Numbers can be secured by contacting TAHC Animal Disease Traceability Department at [animal\\_id@tahc.texas.gov](mailto:animal_id@tahc.texas.gov) or 512-719-0733.

**Q: Where can I order EID tags?**

A: 840 series EID tags can be purchased through tagging companies or for free by request from a state veterinarian office.

The TAHC has a limited number of tags received from the USDA to distribute to Texas producers only. Only Texas accredited veterinarians, cattle producers, and others advancing traceability efforts may order the free tags from the Texas allocation. Tag order requests must be in multiples of 100 tags, a specific brand or delivery date cannot be guaranteed.

Texas residents can order free EID tags through TAHC Animal Disease Traceability Department at [animal\\_id@tahc.texas.gov](mailto:animal_id@tahc.texas.gov) or 512-719-0733.

**Q: Whose responsibility is it to implement the tags?**

A: The rule does not specify tagging responsibility. However, any owner transporting affected classes of cattle across state lines should confirm animals are tagged to avoid delays or inspection concerns. More information is being sought from USDA APHIS to clarify.

**Q: What if I purchase cattle in another state that are not tagged? Can I use my out-of-state PIN to tag an animal in another state?**

A: In short – yes. Let's say for example you are a producer in Texas, purchasing a 24-month-old bull in Nebraska who is not tagged.

Cattle moving across state lines into Texas must have official identification listed on a certificate of veterinary inspection (CVI). As long as the animal is identified with an official tag and is listed on the CVI, the PIN's state of origin does not apply. A producer's own recordkeeping is important to keep track of animal movements associated with your ranch's PIN.

**Q: How much will the tags cost?**

A: 840 EID tags typically range from \$2 - \$4 per tag. Though free tags are available through each state veterinarian's office.

**Q: What's the difference between the old metal tags and the new 840 tags?**

A: The metal tags provided basic, visual identification with limited traceability, while the 840 EID tags offer electronic tracking, enabling more precise, real-time data collection and enhanced traceability for livestock management and disease control.

**Q: Do Bangs tags meet the requirement for the new rule?**

A: Metal “Bangs” tags meet the requirement for official identification for interstate movement of cattle only if the female cattle officially identified with metal “Bangs” tags were tagged prior to Nov. 5, 2024. After that date, only 840 EID, either official calfhood vaccination (OCV) or standard, tags will meet the requirements for official identification for interstate movement.

**Q: Does the 840 tag have to be high frequency? Or will low frequency suffice?**

A: The rule does not specify frequency requirements. Therefore, low frequency, high frequency and ultra-high frequency are acceptable unless otherwise clarified by the USDA.

**Q: Are there any concerns about EID tags being implemented and increasing stress or ear infections on cattle when handling?**

A: Concerns about 840 EID tags include potential stress and ear infections in cattle which can arise from improper handling. Producers are encouraged to follow Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) guidelines for proper cattle handling and tagging.

BQA regulations state EID tags should be placed within the first quarter (from the head) of the animal’s ear between the rises in cartilage, the tag should be closely secured, and producers should only use compatible front and back tag components.

**Q: Do I have to have health certificates anymore if I have an 840 EID tag?**

A: Yes. For the movement of most cattle across state lines, a certificate of veterinary inspection (CVI), or health papers, will also still be required as standard practice in addition to the 840 EID tag.

**Q: How do I know if the 840 EID tag is a federally approved tag?**

A: An official tag will have a 15-digit code beginning with 840 (the U.S. country code), and will have a U.S. shield emblem, proving it is a federally approved tag. The tag must be visually and electronically readable by an EID reader.

**Q: Am I required to own an EID reader?**

A: No, neither producers nor auction markets are required to own EID readers.

**Q: Is it illegal to cut an 840 EID tag out of an ear before or after purchasing?**

A: Yes, it is illegal to remove. The 840 EID tags clearly state “unlawful to remove.”

**Q: What if I tag my cattle, they get stolen and then their tags get cut out? Or what if my animal loses its 840 EID tag? How should I report it?**

A: If an animal loses its official tag and needs a new one, the person applying the new one would have to record the following information and maintain the following information for five years: date the new official identification device was added; official identification number on the new device; and official identification number on the old device, if known.

**Q: What happens to cattle who die and have 840 tags? Do I need to report it?**

A: No, reporting to a state veterinarian office is not required. However, producers are required to keep the animal identification information on file for five years.

**Q: What if I sell an animal that has an EID tag, do I report that, so the new owner is listed for the location of the animal?**

A: No, reporting a change of ownership is not required. A book end system is utilized by federal and state health officials for official reporting; therefore, each transaction is not required to be reported.

In the event of a change of ownership, the TAHC recommends the seller and buyer keep personal record of the official identification number and other associated records for five years. While it is not currently required to do so, this can help exponentially with disease traceability efforts.

### Data Security

**Q: What data is stored by the federal government and who can access it?**

A: USDA APHIS will store the 840 EID tag number, the date the tag was distributed, and the PIN or LID that corresponds to producers' operations.

Animal disease traceability information is housed in federal and state databases that are not publicly available. The databases can only be accessed by government officials who work on high impact animal diseases and have passed heavy data screening training. State animal disease officials can request information from federal databases, but only for their own state.

**Q: What data is collected by state veterinarians?**

A: TAHC will maintain 840 EID tag numbers, the date of distribution, and the corresponding PIN or LID of issue. The 2024 rule mandates that state agencies maintain their records for five years once submitted.

Since PINs and LIDs are housed at state animal health agencies, they will also link to location information such as name, addresses, email, etc.

**Q: What data is *not* tracked?**

A: EID tags and associated data will not track herd history, herd inventory, financials or greenhouse gas emissions.

The rule was not created to place additional taxes on your operation.

Tags do not have GPS trackers. (Only when scanned, a data point will be logged, but they do not collect constant location data while cattle are on ranch day-to-day.)

**Q: Can you guarantee my security from the government if I tag my cattle?**

A: Factually speaking, strong legal precedent exists for protecting federally submitted data from Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests. The Privacy Act bans the government from making unauthorized disclosures on information held in federal databases.

However, the current USDA animal disease traceability plan does not fully align with TSCRA's expectations for data handling and storage. While USDA has assured the industry that data is not publicly available and that steps are in place to restrict access to only allow authorized government officials working on high-impact animal diseases, we are demanding more.

**Q: Is the government equipped to make decisions about tagging cattle if they're not the ones on the farm/ranch putting in the work?**

A: The responsibility for data management should not lie within USDA. Instead, we advocate for a more decentralized approach where the industry has a significant role in managing and protecting its own data. This can be through third-party groups like U.S. CattleTrace, which Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association has been a member of since inception. A third party would limit government access to data, releasing only necessary data when and if an animal disease outbreak were to occur. This infrastructure has already been developed, tested and is ready to deploy.

**Q: Will the rule ever get overturned?**

A: In order for the rule to get overturned, it would have to be removed from the Federal Register by USDA APHIS. An animal disease traceability rule has been in place, in some version, since 2013.

**Q: What will have to happen in the industry for this to become mandatory for all classes of cattle?**

A: A new USDA APHIS rule would have to be proposed, opened for public comment, and published in the Federal Register for the regulation to become mandatory across all classes of cattle.

### Transportation

**Q: If animals are staying in the same state but traveling to a different ranch or to a feedlot, do they need a tag?**

A: No, only animals moving across state lines are required to be tagged under the rule.

**Q: What do I need if I am (either producer or truck driver) traveling across state lines with cattle that fall under the rule?**

A: Covered livestock moved interstate would have to be officially identified with an 840 EID tag and accompanied by an interstate certificate of veterinary inspection (CVI), or other documentation agreed upon by the shipping and receiving states (such as an owner-shipper statement or a brand inspection certificate).

**Q: Where and how will animals be inspected at state lines?**

A: If checked, animals will be inspected at state lines by agricultural inspectors at designated inspection stations or ports of entry, where they check for proper identification and review health certificates.

### Auction Markets

**Q: Are auction markets required to implement readers or tag affected classes of cattle?**

A: No, there is no requirement for auction markets to install EID readers or to tag cattle. However, it is suggested that markets offer tagging services – for a fee – for buyers purchasing untagged cattle.

Auction markets could protect themselves by adding language to sale conditions that state tagging requirements are upon the responsibility of sellers and buyers, in the instance an animal sold at the barn was ever found in violation of the traceability rule.

**Q: How is this ruling different than the Scrapie tagging ruling?**

A: The National Scrapie Eradication Program (NSEP), published April 2019, differs in clear contrast to the Use of Electronic Identification Eartags as Official Identification in Cattle and Bison program. Official language published in the Federal Register delineates movement of animals and information to be kept during inspection times and point-of-sale.

NSEP Part III, Identification Requirements states: “No sheep or goat required to be individually identified or group identified may be sold, disposed of, acquired, exhibited, transported, received for transportation, offered for sale or transportation, loaded, unloaded, or otherwise handled in interstate commerce or commingled with any animals that fall into these categories or be loaded or unloaded at a premises or animal concentration point (including premises that exhibit animals) where animals have been received that have been in interstate commerce or from which animals have moved in interstate commerce or leave the premises on which they currently reside if they are owned by a person who engages in the interstate commerce of animals unless each sheep or goat has been officially identified to the flock of birth or, when allowed, flock of origin.”

In short – sheep and goats cannot be sold without a tag. This differs from the Nov. 5 cattle ruling in that there are no regulations against selling untagged cattle.

NSEP Part II, Section D, 4, A states: “Animals that are not tagged when the inspection begins must be penned separately from sheep or goats from any other flock of origin and must be correctly tagged to their flock of origin prior to commingling and prior to sale.”

This reading falls under “market responsibilities” therefore placing responsibility on the auction market to place tags in untagged sheep or goats. There are no market responsibilities clauses in the Federal Register for the Nov. 5 cattle ruling.

**Q: Will sale barns be responsible for providing my tags?**

A: No. The purchase cost of tags will fall upon the seller or buyer.

**Q: Will this prevent me from selling my cattle at sale barns if I don't tag?**

A: No, tagging is not required under the rule for cattle to sell at barns. Specific auction markets or specialty sales may dictate tagging requirements apart from the existing rule.

**Q: Will cattle haulers be responsible for cattle not being tagged when arriving at the sale barn?**

A: No, since cattle are not required to be tagged before being sold, haulers are not responsible for tagging.

**Q: Who's going to check the ages of my cattle when arriving at sale barns?**

A: Age checking is not required by a barn. If you are purchasing affected classes of cattle that you intend to transport across state lines, it is the buyer's responsibility to ensure age and tagging requirements are met.

### **Disease Outbreak**

**Q: Will the data collected from my cattle ever be used against me if a contagious disease breaks out on my farm?**

A: State and federal animal health officials use data collected for disease traceability only. In the event of a disease outbreak, identifying information that may compromise anonymity is not shared publicly.

The TAHC strives to keep public information related to disease outbreaks helpful but general and does not share data collected from you related to your cattle. If a disease is traced to your premises, animal health officials will conduct disease investigations and work with you to protect animal health and mitigate disease spread on your property and beyond.

**Q: Will my herd be eliminated if a contagious disease breaks out in my cattle, and it's traced back to me?**

A: Various cattle and other animal diseases are responded to differently, based on the disease. Animal health officials, including veterinarians and epidemiologists conduct disease investigations and utilize existing emergency management plans to respond to disease outbreaks. Depending on the disease, differing disease elimination strategies are utilized to prevent further disease spread and protect animal health. These strategies can include testing plans, vaccination plans, disease monitoring, environmental sampling, depopulation, etc. In the event of depopulation, federal indemnity may be available.

**Q: If there is an outbreak of a contagious disease, how will the implementation of tags help eliminate the contamination.**

A: The transition to EID tags will allow for a more rapid response to disease outbreak. This will allow regions of affected contagious disease to be isolated, therefore allowing the speed of commerce to continue as such outside the isolation zone.

**Q: How will EID tags eliminate the possibility of a contagious disease outbreak?**

A: Animal disease traceability does not prevent disease; however, an efficient and accurate traceability system helps reduce the number of animals involved and exposed in a disease investigation and reduces the time needed to respond. Reducing the number of animal owners impacted by an animal disease event reduces the economic strain on owners and affected communities.