

Top tips for compliance with sheep and goat identification

Livestock identification and recording remain one of the most common failure areas under Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) inspections. If you are a BPS claimant keeping sheep and goats, you must adhere to the sheep and goat identification and recording rules in cross compliance [Statutory Management Requirement \(SMR\) 8](#).

The Farming Advice Service (FAS) have produced some top tips to address the most common non-compliances identified during SMR 8 inspections.

1. Ensure all your holding(s) are **registered** for keeping sheep/goats

You must notify the [Animal and Plant Health Agency](#) (APHA) that you keep sheep or goats on a holding (all land with different County Parish Holding (CPH) numbers) within 30 days of them first arriving. If you add land with different holding numbers to your farm business, check with the APHA that they have been registered for keeping sheep/goats (don't assume a previous owner has done so). APHA will provide you with a unique flock/herd mark, which will be shown on all ear tags.

2. Consider how the rules on merging or associating land that you use within a 10-mile radius of your main holding could simplify reporting and recording movements within your business

Under the 10-mile rule you can register all of the land that you use within a 10-mile radius, whether on a temporary or permanent basis, under one CPH number. This replaced the 5-mile rule that previously applied to holdings for sheep and goats. This change significantly reduces recording and reporting burdens for some keepers, as movements within a single CPH do not have to be recorded or reported and do not trigger a [standstill period](#).

If land that you use on a temporary basis is within ten miles of a permanent CPH that you hold, you can apply to APHA for a Temporary Land Association (TLA). A TLA will last up to a year (with an option to renew), during which time, the land covered would be **treated as part of your permanent CPH** for livestock recording and reporting purposes and disease controls.

More information on this can be found on [GOV.UK](#)

3. Record when you tag animals and their tag numbers

Sheep and goats born on a holding must be [correctly identified](#) within six months (intensively farmed) or nine months (extensively farmed), or before they leave the holding – whichever is earliest. Many keepers forget to record this information even though it has been a requirement since 2010. You must record this information in section 3 of the [holding register](#).

4. Record details of any lost or damaged tags you replace

You must replace any lost or illegible tags within 28 days of noticing the damage/loss (this includes any electronic identifiers (EIDs) that you may discover are not working when scanned). You must record details of the replacement tags in section 2 of the [holding register](#).

5. Record details of animal deaths on the holding

Keepers must record details of animal deaths in section 4 of the [holding register](#). This includes information about the month and year of death, and where known, individual animal identification numbers (or flock/herd marks for slaughter animals), number of dead animals, breed (if known) and disposal method.

6. Report movements and record them in your holding register

Movements must comply with [the general licence for movement of sheep and goats](#) and be recorded in the [holding register](#) (Section 5 for 'off-movements', section 6 for 'on-movements'). They must be reported using the [Animal Reporting and Movement Service](#) (ARAMS). This can be done electronically by setting up an account on their website or on paper by completing the [ARAMS-1 Movement Document](#).

Make sure that the required information has been entered accurately on the movement document, including the individual animal tag numbers (unless moving to a Central Point Recording Centre (CPRC) market), or for slaughter animals, the total number of animals and the correct location addresses CPH numbers etc. It is also desirable to enter the mix of flock marks. Always check the completeness and accuracy of the tag data you are supplied by the CPRC.

Please note that it is the legal responsibility of the [destination keeper](#) to report the completion of a move to their premises using the ARAMS service (paper bureau or electronic option). The dispatching keeper/ business cannot do this on their behalf. Defra cannot presume a move has completed on the basis of the sending keeper notifying the move on ARAMS. If the receiving keeper does not report the move, and it is also not recorded in their register, it is an offence and a cross compliance risk.

Failure to enter movements in your register may result in a reduction in your BPS claim. Your register should be retained for three years after the last animal in it has left the holding and should be available on request to an inspector.

7. Tag your animals correctly

Sheep and goats kept past 12 months of age must have two identifiers, both with the same individual ID number. Sheep must have one EID but this is not mandatory for goats. **Animals intended for slaughter within 12 months of birth** may alternatively be identified with the single EID batch ear tag, displaying the flock/herd mark only.

8. Record and submit an annual inventory of the animals on the holding

Keepers must record [annual inventory](#) of their animals in section 7 of the [holding register](#), and complete and return the annual inventory document sent by Defra in late November. Defra collect summary data about the number of sheep on your holding on 1 December each year. If this is not returned, it will increase your risk of selection for a cross compliance inspection. Not recording the inventory in your register may result in a reduction in your BPS claim.

Guidance on registering your holdings, tagging, record keeping, and reporting movements of sheep and goats can be found on [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) and on [ARAMS](https://www.arams.gov.uk).

9. Follow these simple steps to reduce your risk of a cross compliance breach at inspection

- Check that sheep are **all correctly tagged** when they are in the pens for other tasks. Replace lost or damaged tags and record that in the replacement section of your flock register.
- Make sure that your **record keeping system is suitable** for the scale and complexity of your sheep business. Options include a hand written flock register, excel spreadsheet version of the flock register, livestock management software packages incorporating the flock register, or a free on-line register on the [ARAMS](https://www.arams.gov.uk) website for those keepers who use it to electronically report moves. Each CPH or tCPH you use needs a separate flock register.
- Consider how an **EID reader** might help to simplify the management of information and help with record keeping. A simple stick reader and printer would record and print a list of tag numbers which could be attached to a movement form and used to update the flock register.
- Sign up as a farmer user of [ARAMS](https://www.arams.gov.uk) and you can carry out regular checks that movement details as reported on [ARAMS](https://www.arams.gov.uk) for your holding are correct.

The '[Keeping sheep, goats, pigs and deer](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/keeping-sheep-goats-pigs-and-deer)' page on GOV.UK has several guidance pages detailing all of the information in this top tips document further.

Get in touch with the FAS

If you would like to speak to a free, independent adviser regarding the sheep registration and identification rules, please contact FAS on 0300 020 0301 or email advice@farmingadvice.org.uk.

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