

# Tagging Sheep—Practical Tips for Crofters and Smallholders



Tagging sheep can be viewed as complicated and confusing when for most crofters and smallholders, there are only a few tagging requirements to remember. This guide will outline the requirement to tag, types of tag, when to tag, and how to record tagging in your flock record book.

## Why do we Tag Sheep?

The purpose is to trace movements of animals in the event of a disease outbreak. It is a legal requirement to do so. Some crofters and farmers also use tags to identify sheep to record how well they perform.

## Sheep Tag Types

There are 3 basic types of tag:

### 1. The Batch or Slaughter Tag

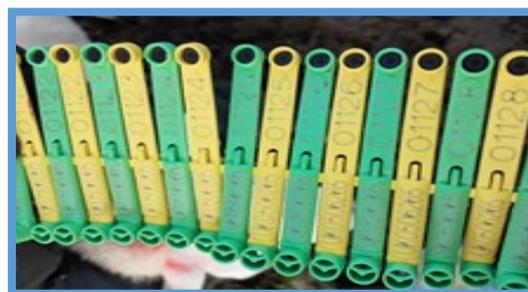
The 'batch' or 'slaughter' tag normally only has your flockmark printed on it, eg., UK123456.

Inside the tag is an electronic chip that carries the flock number plus a sequential number. When tags are purchased they always follow on from the last set of numbers i.e. 1 to 10 – and then 11 to 20.



### 2. The Double Tag

The double tag has one YELLOW tag containing a chip, similar to the slaughter tag, but it has both the FLOCK number and a SEQUENTIAL number printed on the tag. The paired tag is non-electronic and also has the FLOCK number and SEQUENTIAL number printed on it.



Note that the flock number is preceded by an extra "0" which denotes a double tag., eg., UK0123456

### 3. The Replacement Tag

The replacement tag is always **RED**. It consists of one tag that has an electronic chip and has the FLOCK number and SEQUENTIAL number printed on it. The paired tag is non-electronic and has the same detail printed on it.



## Sheep Tagging : Store Lambs, Finishing Lambs, Ewe Hoggs, Bought in Sheep

All lambs should be tagged within the first 9 months of life, or before they leave the holding they were born on, whichever is soonest.

Looking at the tagging of sheep we are best viewing the initial tagging of Store or Finished Lambs as the start of the animals' identification life.

### 1. The Store or Finished Lamb

The store or finished lamb has two options for tagging:

Batch tags are used in lambs going off the holding to a mart or private buyer in the 1<sup>st</sup> 12 months of its life.

Alternatively, the lambs can be double tagged, however this means that the buyer must record the individual tag number. Therefore, for ease of recording, most crofters and farmers will use the single batch or slaughter tag in lambs if selling store or finished.

#### a. BATCH (SLAUGHTER) TAGS

Example:

This is a lamb going to a store sale at the mart in a group of 26 lambs. The ELECTRONIC, single BATCH tag should be inserted in the left ear of the animal.



The entry in your flock record is as follows:

Record of Identification						
Record all identification applied to animals born or identified for the first time after 31/12/2009. Record within 48 hours.						
1. Mandatory	2. Mandatory	3. Mandatory	4. Mandatory	5. Mandatory, if known	6. Mandatory, if known	7. Optional
Date	Full identification number(s) – visual	Number of animals identified	Year of birth	Breed	Genotype	Own use
10/10/2020	UK0506265 Batch	26	2020	Tex X		Store Lambs Dingwall Mixed

b. If DOUBLE TAGS are used the entry would be as follows:

Record of Identification						
Record all identification applied to animals born or identified for the first time after 31/12/2009. Record within 48 hours.						
1. Mandatory	2. Mandatory	3. Mandatory	4. Mandatory	5. Mandatory, if known	6. Mandatory, if known	7. Optional
Date	Full identification number(s) – visual	Number of animals identified	Year of birth	Breed	Genotype	Own use
10/10/2020	UK0506265 00946 - 00974	26	2020	Tex X		Store Lambs Dingwall Mixed

## 2. The Retained Lamb

Lambs that are being retained on your croft or smallholding, either for replacement ewe lambs for breeding, lambs for future finishing or for selling at a later date. These should all be double tagged.

The colour of the non-electronic tags can be changed every year and can be used by the stock holder to act as a management tool in identifying the year of birth visually without having to handle the ewe to read the tag.

This ewe lamb has the electronic yellow tag in the left ear and the non-electronic coloured tag in the right.



The entries in the record of identification section of your book should be entered as shown below.

Record of Identification						
Record all identification applied to animals born or identified for the first time after 31/12/2009. Record within 48 hours.						
1. Mandatory	2. Mandatory	3. Mandatory	4. Mandatory	5. Mandatory, if known	6. Mandatory, if known	7. Optional
Date	Full identification number(s) – visual	Number of animals identified	Year of birth	Breed	Genotype	Own use
19/09/2020	UK0506265 00826-00840	20	2020	Tex X		SUSSS Retained Ewe Lambs
10/10/2020	UK506265 00997 - 01000	4	2020	Tex X		Tup Lambs

## 3. Bought in Sheep

A sheep, purchased from out with the holding, privately or at the mart, will be tagged with the FLOCK number of its place of birth. (or, if it ever lost its tag it will have red tags with the flock number of a previous owner).

If the purchased sheep is less than 12 months old, it may have a batch/slaughter tag. If over 12 months old, it will have a double tag.

Lambs purchased with a BATCH tag will require replacement tags, which are double tags, by the time the lamb is 12 months old. E.g., bought in ewe lambs or wedder hogs (males).

### Bought in Sheep that Lose a Tag

If a sheep purchased from another holding (e.g., a tup) loses **one tag or both tags** then you must retag with double RED replacement tags.

Any remaining tag should be removed so that the only tags are the red replacement tags. The replacement tags will have your FLOCK number and the next available identification number in the sequence.

Red tags are only ever used to replace tags on bought in sheep.



When retagging sheep, you must record the tag number removed (if known) and enter the replacement tag for each tag replaced. This should be recorded in the **Record of Replacement** section of your record book.

**NOTE:** If sheep are double tagged when purchased there is **no** necessity to cut out the existing tags and replace them with RED replacement tags when they come on to the holding. If they are to be sold they can be sold with the existing tag. **NO REQUIREMENT TO REPLACE**

Record of Replacement Tags Identification				
Identification must be replaced within 28 days of discovering the loss. Record within 48 hours.				
1. Mandatory	2. Mandatory	3. Mandatory, if known	4. Optional	5. Optional
Date of replacement	Replacement number(s) – visual	Previous Identification	Reason for Replacement, e.g. upgrade, lost, illegible	Own Use
15/09/2020	UK506265 01001 01010	UK0501234 Batch	Replace Batch tags purchased ewe lambs	Purchased ewe lambs
21/11/2020	UK0506265 01011	UK0501234 00113	lost a tag	Purchased ewe

### Top Tips

- The Electronic tag is recommended to go in the LEFT ear
- The Electronic tag is always YELLOW
- Lambs can be sold with a single BATCH tag up until 12 months old
- It is easier for the purchaser to buy lambs on a BATCH/slaughter tag, as they will have only need to record the flock mark, not every individual number.
- All sheep must be tagged (either batch or double) within 9 months of age, or before they leave the holding of birth, and must be double tagged if still on the holding after 12 months of age (batch tags upgraded if required).
- If purchased stock lose an identification tag they must have red replacement tags inserted.
- Any tagging event must be recorded in your Flock Record Book
- When double tagging, use the tags in order and make a note of the first tag used in each strip of tags. Keep any broken tags and note the number. This makes filling in the records much easier.