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Dear Herdkeeper

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT CATTLE IDENTIFICATION

I am writing to you about three important cattle identification issues.

1. Animals presented at an abattoir with only one tag

You must check **before** leaving your holding that your cattle have one complete identical tag in each ear. However, if you arrive at an abattoir with an animal that has lost a tag on the way, the abattoir can now accept it for slaughter without the need for you to apply a new replacement tag. The animal will only be accepted for slaughter if it is accompanied by the correct documentation and the animal shows **evidence** that a second tag had been applied.

Where there is no evidence that a second tag had been applied, the abattoir will detain the animal. It will be destroyed if you are unable to prove its identity.

This change applies only in the **exceptional** circumstances that a tag is lost during transit. If you regularly present animals at an abattoir with only one tag we may take legal action against you and it may affect your Single Farm Payment. Under the law, cattle on your holding and at markets must always bear two identical tags. I would therefore urge you in the strongest terms possible to ensure that all your cattle are correctly tagged.

2. New Valid Dam Failure (VDF) Status

From 1 January 2009, a new Identification, Registration and Movement (IRM) status has been introduced in order to relax cattle movement restrictions as far as possible. If you register two births to the same dam within 9 months, or provide details of a dam that was not in the herd at the time of the birth, we will apply a new VDF status instead of a DOBQ (Date of Birth Query) status.

The advantage of this change for you is that animals with VDF statuses can move within Northern Ireland, unlike those with a DOBQ status. They will also still be eligible for slaughter within Northern Ireland for human consumption. However, as with the DOBQ status, you **cannot** export animals with a VDF status to GB, the South or other Member States.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

If you have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the textphone on 028 9052 4420

An Roinn Talmhaíochta agus Forbartha Tuaithe
Mánnystrie o Fairms an Kintra Fordèrin

3. Use of DNA Parentage tests in APHIS Status appeals

We allow you to use DNA evidence in an appeal if we apply an IRM status to your cattle on APHIS, for example, if we apply an NNO to a calf that you notify outside the 27-day birth notification limit. We will treat DNA evidence in the same way as other evidence, such as, your herd register, freeze brand, or pedigree drawing.

You can use a DNA test to prove calf/dam relationships, but not siblings or sire/calf links. The rules, which are detailed in the enclosed guidance, include a 9 month time limit for making an appeal. Your appeal must be received by DARD within 9 months of the date that the status was applied to the animal on APHIS. Appeals received after this period will only be accepted in very exceptional circumstances. The purpose of a time limit is to maintain the highest possible level of confidence in the accuracy of the information held on APHIS.

If you want to provide DNA evidence, complete the enclosed application form and arrange for your Private Veterinary Practitioner (PVP) to take samples. You are responsible for the cost of the PVP and laboratory testing. The PVP will send the samples to one of the approved laboratories on the attached list and return the form to your local Divisional Veterinary Office or DARD Direct Office.

Cattle with NNO, IDQ and DOBQ Statuses

In February 2006 you were advised that we intended to exclude all cattle with an NNO, IDQ or DOBQ status from the human food chain. We postponed this policy in March 2006. I am now taking this opportunity to advise you that we no longer intend to introduce this ban. Whether such cattle can enter the human food chain will continue to be considered on a case by case basis.

Collection of Stillborn Calves

I am also taking this opportunity to advise you that if you have a bovine animal which aborts you are entitled to avail of a free collection service for bovine aborted material, regardless of whether you are a member of the National Fallen Stock Scheme. The free service is being piloted as a Brucellosis control measure to encourage farmers to report abortions and we expect it to run until the end of March 2009. The service extends to the aborted foetus, or a calf which is born dead or which dies within 24 hours of birth, as well as the placenta and any bedding/manure contaminated by placental fluids.

Further information can be obtained from your local Divisional Veterinary Office (DVO), DARD Direct Office or the DARD website on www.dardni.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely



Colette Connor
Animal Identification, Legislation and Welfare Branch