



National Livestock  
Identification Scheme

## A guide to using NLIS approved ear tags and rumen boluses



## Introduction

The National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS) uses a system of identifying individual cattle with approved NLIS devices in the form of either an ear tag or rumen bolus/ visual tag combination.

Once an NLIS device is attached properly, it should remain with the animal for life. If you purchase cattle that are already NLIS identified, you DO NOT need to apply another NLIS device.

A convenient time to identify your cattle is at marking or weaning. Applying NLIS devices correctly the first time avoids the cost and inconvenience of re-identifying the animal.

## Using NLIS approved devices

- Always read and follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Use the correct applicator for the device being applied.
- Do not apply another NLIS device to an animal that is already identified with an NLIS tag or rumen bolus.
- NLIS ear tags must be applied to the offside (right) ear.
- Only apply NLIS devices issued to your property. You cannot apply devices from another property, even if that property is also owned by you.
- Penalties may apply under state or territory legislation for improperly removing or otherwise using NLIS devices.

## NLIS approved ear tags

NLIS approved ear tags come in two colours, signifying when they must be used.

- **White breeder tag** – use these for cattle you have bred and that are still on your property.
- **Orange post-breeder tags** – use these for cattle you have purchased and that are not already identified with an NLIS device.

## Applying NLIS approved ear tags

### Step 1

Ensure you have the correct applicator for the tags you are using. Prevent damage to the tag's electronics by following the manufacturer's instructions when loading the female section of the tag into the applicator.

### Step 2

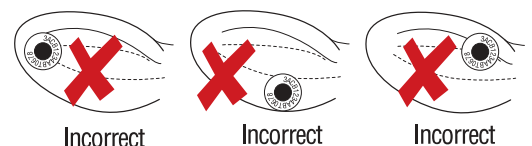
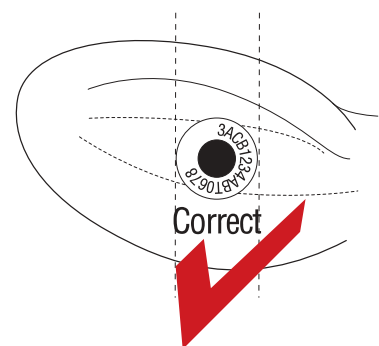
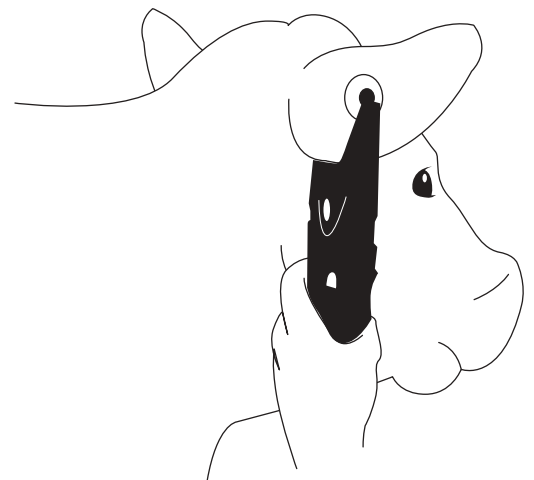
Slip the male section of the tag onto the application pin, following the manufacturer's instructions.

### Step 3

Dip the end of the applicator with the tag into disinfectant before applying the tag.

### Step 4

Locate the correct position where the tag should be applied in the right (offside) ear. With the female side of the tag facing forwards and the male part of the tag entering from the back of the ear, apply the tag firmly.



## Troubleshooting NLIS approved ear tags

### Problem: Tag has snapped and is lost

#### Explanation:

The tag snapped and broke to avoid ripping the animal's ear, which is a feature designed to reduce injury to the animal. Tags can become snagged on fences, gates and feed bins particularly when tags are applied towards the end of the ear.

#### Solution:

Retag the animal with a white breeder tag if the animal is still on its property of birth, or with an orange post-breeder tag if it is an introduced animal. If you know the number of the lost tag contact the NLIS Helpdesk so that a link with the new tag number can be created in the NLIS database.

### Problem: Ear has ripped and tag is lost

#### Explanation:

The tag has become snagged and has ripped the ear and fallen out.

#### Solution:

Retag the animal placing the new tag closer to the head and away from the torn section of the ear. Use a white breeder tag if the animal is still on its property of birth, or an orange post-breeder tag if it is an introduced animal. If you know the number of the lost tag contact the NLIS Helpdesk so that a link with the new tag number can be created in the NLIS database.

### Problem: Microchip within the tag does not work

#### Explanation:

On occasions, the microchip may be smashed during or after application and results in the tag not being able to be read with a reader.

#### Solution:

In some cases, if you re-read the tag it will read. If the tag cannot be read after a second attempt you may need to replace the damaged tag. Use a white breeder tag if the animal is still on its property of birth, or an orange post-breeder tag if it is an introduced animal. Notify your relevant State Department and the NLIS Helpdesk of the new tag number and the damaged tag number so that a link can be created in the NLIS database.

### Problem: Tag is lost but ear is not ripped

**Explanation:** The tag has become snagged and has pulled through the hole in the ear. The hole in the ear will increase if the wound created by the pin becomes infected. Minimise this risk by placing the tag in disinfectant prior to application.

#### Solution:

Retag the animal with a new tag avoiding the hole left by the lost tag. Use a white breeder tag if the animal is still on its property of birth, or an orange post-breeder tag if it is an introduced animal. If you find the lost tag intact, do not reuse it. If you know the number of the lost tag contact the NLIS Helpdesk so that a link with the new tag number may be created in the NLIS database.

### Problem: Tag falls out immediately after application

#### Explanation:

The pin has not been successfully inserted into the female component of the tag during application. This can occur if insufficient pressure is placed on the handles of the applicator during attachment, if the wrong applicator is used, or if the applicator pin is bent.

#### Solution:

Check that you have the correct applicator and that the pin is not bent. Firmly retag the animal, using the same female tag component.

## NLIS approved rumen boluses

Used as an alternative to identifying cattle with NLIS ear tags, a NLIS rumen bolus is a capsule that is inserted into the animal from three months of age.

After application, the bolus comes to rest in the reticulum for the life of the animal. The bolus contains an electronic transponder that can be read electronically, and is issued with a matching non-electronic ear tag for manual reading and/or visual confirmation that a bolus has been installed.

Whilst more expensive than ear tags they can be recycled – subject to your processor being prepared to collect and return them to the manufacturer as part of an authorised recycling program. They are also a greater deterrent to stock theft as they can only be removed at slaughter.



## Applying NLIS approved rumen boluses

### Step 1

Load the rumen bolus into the applicator following the manufacturer's instructions.

### Step 2

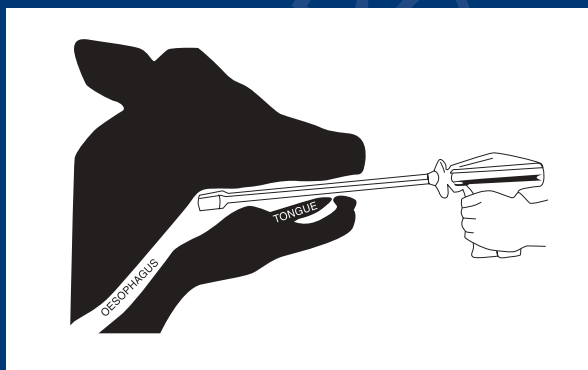
With the animal restrained, insert the applicator in the mouth until past the base of the tongue and then release the trigger on the applicator.

### Step 3

Remove the applicator gently from the throat of the animal, checking that the bolus was released.

### Step 4

You may want to confirm that the bolus is present by reading it. Then, apply the matching non-electronic ear tag to the offside (right) ear in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.



## Troubleshooting NLIS approved rumen boluses

**Problem: The animal regurgitates the rumen bolus**

### Explanation:

The animal does not accept the rumen bolus and spits it out.

### Solution:

Reinsert the same rumen bolus. Always apply rumen boluses to animals that are older than three months of age. This ensures that the rumen and reticulum is developed enough to enable the rumen bolus to remain in the animal. Some producers yard cattle for several hours after applying a rumen bolus to ensure it is not regurgitated. If possible, before releasing the animal, use an RFID reader to check that the rumen bolus is present.

## Purchasing NLIS approved devices

Obtain the application form for ordering NLIS devices from the following organisations.

<b>NSW</b>	Local rural merchandiser, or local Rural Lands Protection Board
<b>VIC</b>	Victorian Department of Primary Industries – Ph:1800 678 779
<b>QLD</b>	Queensland Department of Primary Industries – Ph: 13 25 23
<b>TAS</b>	Local rural merchandiser, or The Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment – Ph: 1300 368 550
<b>NT</b>	Northern Territory Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development – Ph: (08) 8999 2033
<b>SA</b>	South Australian Primary Industries and Resources – Ph: (08) 8207 7919
<b>WA</b>	Brands Register Office Ph: (08) 9780 6207

There are several manufacturers of NLIS devices. Information regarding devices is contained in the NLIS Equipment Compatibility Guide. Contact Meat and Livestock Australia by calling the NLIS Helpdesk on 1800 654 743 to obtain your copy.



© Meat & Livestock Australia Limited  
ABN 39 081 678 364

Level 1, 165 Walker Street North Sydney NSW 2060  
Locked Bag 991 North Sydney 2059

Ph: (02) 9463 9333 Fax: (02) 9463 9393

[www.mla.com.au](http://www.mla.com.au)

Printed May 2003

ISBN 1 74036 163 6