

National traceability

If there is a disease outbreak, a biosecurity threat or a food safety incident, rapid and reliable tracing of sheep to identify the source of a disease or issue, contain it and minimise impacts is essential.

Australia has a world-leading livestock identification and traceability system that ensures every sheep is traceable through the supply chain from birth to processing and that we meet the standards set for global trade by the World Organisation for Animal Health.

Under the [National Livestock Identification System](#) (NLIS) every farm has a unique Property Identification Code, all livestock are identified with an accredited NLIS tag or device from their property of birth, and all livestock movements are recorded in a national database.

In 2022, Commonwealth, State and Territory Agriculture Ministers agreed to introduce a national mandatory individual electronification (eID) for sheep and goats by 1 January 2025 to strengthen our national traceability approach. This replaces visual tags which have been in use in all states and territories since 2006.

Protecting the industry and consumers

During their lives, animals often move between properties or through saleyards, agricultural shows, feedlots and processing facilities. Being able to rapidly trace these movements is critically important to:

- **Facilitate swift responses by government and industry in the event of emergency animal disease outbreaks.** Failing to identify diseases quickly and deploy an effective, fast and targeted response can have devastating impacts, particularly for highly infectious diseases like Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD).
- **Maintain market access.** 'Market access' refers to Australia's ability to sell products to markets here and overseas. Our sector is very export reliant, with 70% of our lamb production and 92% of our mutton sold overseas, and 98% of wool. Australia negotiates preferential access to markets in part by promoting its robust export certification processes, ability to meet importing countries requirements and ability to provide assurances on the safety of our products.
- **Manage food safety and public health.** Sheep and goats may be contaminated with residues or infectious agents that pose a risk to other animals and humans. Rapid tracing of livestock is essential to manage and reduce the impacts of a food safety risk, preventing food contamination and minimising trade effects.

Additional advantages of electronic identification

A national eID-driven system has advantages beyond tracing specific stock, knowing which animals had contact with them and improving Australia's rate of detection, containment and response.

There are benefits for individual producers as well. For a start, livestock can be traced more quickly and accurately on-farm using eID than using visual identification.

Producers have also been using eID for many years already to inform their decisions and increase productivity. Electronic identification provides farmers with data and technology to better understand their flock, fine-tune practices and genetics, and trial innovations. One example is tracking genetic gains according to bloodline or sire group.

Finally, eID presents a significant opportunity to share information from processors back to producers about the quality of their carcase. This helps producers make informed decisions about what's working well and where they can improve.

This will become even more important in the future to support a potential value-based grading system where product will be priced according to its quality, based on an objective measure of carcase quality.

Proud of the role Sheep Producers Australia has played

Sheep Producers Australia has played a key role over many years advocating for eID and a stronger, more efficient and accurate national traceability system.

Key to this has been engaging with all State Farming Organisations and across the supply chain and advocating to government for industry support and a fair transition.

Sheep Producers Australia also engages regularly with its Policy Council and members on traceability reform and provides them the opportunity to give feedback on state-based issues related to national traceability reform and harmonisation.