



OREGON  
DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE

# MESSY EARS ARE BEAUTIFUL

The ears of sheep and goats tell us a lot about them and their history.



## THE IMPORTANCE OF EARS

Official Identification of sheep and goats is very important. It is permanent ID that follows the animal for its whole life. It allows state and federal animal health officials to track where that animal has been throughout its life, which is important in controlling animal disease.



All official ID tags have the US Shield on them, indicating that they are approved by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

**IT IS A FEDERAL CRIME TO REMOVE OFFICIAL  
IDENTIFICATION TAGS**

March 2025

# Official ID Types

OFFICIAL ID COMMONLY FOUND ON SHEEP AND GOATS  
INCLUDE: SCRAPIE TAGS, REGISTRATION TATTOOS, SERIAL  
TAGS, RFID 840 TAGS, AND MICROCHIPS.



## SCRAPIE TAGS

Scrapie ID tags are made up of two parts: the Flock ID number for the flock the animal was born in, and an individual animal ID number. Together they make a unique Scrapie ID number.



## REGISTRATION TATTOOS

Tattoos can be used as official ID for animals only if the tattoo is on their registration papers and those papers must accompany the animal as it travels. Each ear has part of the tattoo in it. The tattoo is not complete unless both ears are read. Tattoos CANNOT be used for crossbred or unregistered animals.



## SERIAL TAGS

Serial tags begin with the origin state code followed by 1 or 2 letters, then 4 digits. These tags are usually orange and are only distributed to veterinarians. Serial tags look a lot like Scrapie tags and are often mistakenly called scrapie ID.



## RFID 840 TAGS

Also called AIN tags. These are becoming more popular with sheep and goat producers. The number always starts with 840 and has 15 digits. These tags can be read visually or with an RFID reading device.



## MICROCHIPS

Microchips can be used as official ID in sheep and goats. However, the microchip number must start with 840, the microchip must be implanted at the base of the ear and the ear must be tattooed with an E. Alternatively, the microchip can be placed at the base of the tail and the tail must be tattooed with an ET. The microchip number must be recorded with the breed registry. If unregistered, the flock must be registered with USDAs National Scrapie Eradication Program and the Flock ID number must be tattooed on the ear, tail, or flank in addition to the E or ET. A microchip reader must accompany the animal as it travels.