

Guidance

Tag, tattoo or slap mark pigs

How and when to identify pigs (livestock and pets) with ear tags, ear tattoos or slap marks so they can be traced.

From: **Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs**
([/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-environment-food-rural-affairs))

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Applies to England

Guidance for Northern Ireland

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/moving-goods-into-out-of-or-through-northern-ireland>)

Guidance for Scotland

(<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/animal-welfare/IDtraceability/pig>)

Guidance for Wales

(<http://gov.wales/topics/environmentcountryside/ahw/farmanimaltracing/pigkeepersguidance/?lang=en>)

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You must identify pigs with any of the following before they leave your holding or premises:

- an ear tag in either ear
- a tattoo on either ear
- 2 visible slap marks (a tattoo applied to the front of both of the pig's shoulders, with special equipment)

You must do this even if the pig has an existing ear tag, tattoo or slap marks from another holding or premises. This is because pigs must be identified with the herd mark for the holding they're moved from.

This is a legal requirement so pigs can be traced. It helps to prevent and contain the outbreak of disease. It's your responsibility to follow the rules to avoid penalties such as movement restrictions, fines or prosecution.

When to tag, tattoo or slap mark pigs

You must tag, tattoo or slap mark pigs before they leave your holding or premises.

There are 2 exceptions. You do not have to tag, tattoo or slap mark a pig if:

1. You're moving the pig to a vet for emergency treatment.
2. You're moving a pig aged less than 12 months old, from its holding of birth directly to another farm.

When moving a pig under 12 months old to another farm, you can

use a temporary paint mark to identify it instead. You can use a mark of your choice, for example, a blue dot or a black cross. This should last until the pig reaches the destination farm.

What ear tags, ear tattoos and slap marks to use

All ear tags, ear tattoos and slap marks must show your herd mark. You must contact the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) to [get a herd mark \(https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-livestock-to-get-a-flock-or-herd-mark\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/register-livestock-to-get-a-flock-or-herd-mark) for each species of livestock you keep.

You can choose where to buy ear tags and tattoo and slap mark equipment. You may want to use a [sheep and goat ear tag supplier approved by the Rural Payments Agency \(RPA\) \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/approved-sheep-and-goat-ear-tag-suppliers/approved-sheep-and-goat-ear-tag-suppliers\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/approved-sheep-and-goat-ear-tag-suppliers/approved-sheep-and-goat-ear-tag-suppliers).

Some suppliers of ear tags for livestock also supply slap mark equipment.

Ear tag and ear tattoo requirements

Ear tags and ear tattoos must start with the letters 'UK' if you're moving the pigs within Great Britain.

They must start with 'GB' or 'UK-GB' if you intend to export the pigs or move them to Northern Ireland.

Your 6-character herd mark must be directly after the 'UK', 'GB' or 'UK-GB'. For example, UK AB1234 (herd mark).

All ear tags must be:

- printed or stamped (but a unique identification number can be added in permanent marker)
- easy to read throughout the pig's lifetime
- made of either metal or plastic or a combination of both
- tamper resistant (which means it can only be removed by cutting it)

- heat resistant (so the ear tag, and information on it, cannot be damaged when the carcase is processed after slaughter)
- designed to remain attached to the pig without harming it
- replaced, if lost or removed for welfare reasons

You may remove any existing ear tags from previous keepers, when identifying a pig with an ear tag containing your herd mark.

When to add a unique identification number

You must make up a unique identification number for the pig and add it to the ear tag or ear tattoo if you're moving it to:

- an exhibition or show
- an artificial insemination (AI) centre or any other location for breeding (for example, a farm)
- another country outside of Great Britain

You do not have to add a unique identification number if you're moving pigs anywhere else.

Add the unique identification number to the ear tag or ear tattoo after your herd mark. For example, UK AB1234 (herd mark) 99 (unique identification number).

You can either:

- add the unique identification number to an existing ear tag (for example, with a permanent marker)
- ask your ear tag or tattoo supplier to make the tag or tattoo equipment with the herd mark and the unique identification number

If a pig already has slap marks, you can add an ear tag or tattoo with a unique identification number. Make sure the unique identification number comes after the herd mark.

How to identify imported pigs

Any pigs you import from outside the UK to your holding will most likely have an existing ear tag, ear tattoo or other form of identifier.

You must apply an ear tag, ear tattoo or slap marks that meet the requirements for England. You should do this within 30 days of the imported pig arriving on your holding.

It must include:

- UK
- your herd mark
- a unique identification number, if needed
- the letter 'F' at the end, to show it's an imported animal

You do not have to do this if the pigs will go directly for slaughter within 30 days of their arrival in the UK. This is the only exception.

When you move pigs from Northern Ireland

The sending keeper must make sure the pigs are correctly identified by following the [rules on moving pigs to Northern Ireland to Great Britain](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/exporting-pigs-great-britain-and-eu-member-states) (<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/exporting-pigs-great-britain-and-eu-member-states>).

As the receiving keeper, you do not need to tag, tattoo or slap mark pigs you move from Northern Ireland. You'll only need to do this when you move them off your holding.

How to identify pigs you intend to move to Northern Ireland or export

You must identify pigs that you move to Northern Ireland or export, with either an:

- ear tag

- ear tattoo

You cannot use slap marks.

The ear tag or tattoo can be on either ear and must show:

- GB or UK-GB
- your herd mark
- a unique identification number for the pig (you can make this up)

For example, the format should be: UK-GB AB1234 (herd mark) 99 (unique identification number) or GB AB1234 (herd mark) 99 (unique identification number).

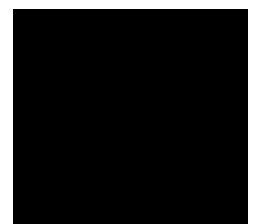
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