

# Michigan's RFID Deadline Approaching Fast

*On March 1, all cattle in Michigan must be tagged before being sold*

Just over a year ago, the Michigan Agriculture Commission voted to mandate electronic radio frequency identification (RFID) on all Michigan cattle. The March 1, 2007 deadline is closing in fast, and still applicable for all farms in Michigan.

According to Kevin Kirk, special assistant to the state veterinarian with the Michigan Department of Agriculture, some farmers are still confused about the rules regarding electronic identification.

When the USDA announced the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) would be a voluntary program some Michigan farmers incorrectly assumed the ruling also applied to Michigan. Not so, says Kevin, noting that farmers need to understand there are two electronic identification programs ongoing, but only one applies to them. The national program, the NAIS, is a nationwide, voluntary program that Michigan producers should not worry about unless they want to participate.

"All Michigan cattle producers must continue to follow the rules of Michigan's mandatory electronic animal identification system, which means that if you raise cattle of any kind, you must have electronic ID tags in each animal's ear by March 1 if it will be sold," Kevin says. "There is no option, no opting out. It's the law, but it only applies to cattle. No other animal species are required to have electronic ID."

## Cattle Movement

Cattle owners are also concerned about movement permits and reporting. Michigan law does not require reporting if cattle are moving within the borders of any of the state's three TB zones. Permits are required to move cattle from one

zone to another, just like they are required to move cows out of state.

"For example, an animal moving from Yale to Escanaba must have a permit, because it moves from the Modified Accredited Advanced zone into the TB Free zone," Kevin says. "If the animal moves from Mount Pleasant to Kalamazoo, no movement permit is required, since both cities are within the Modified Accredited Advanced zone."

## Ordering Tags

As of January 17, 5,150 producers had ordered 490,669 RFID tags. With 16,414 premises registered, the figures show that less than half of the producers who should be ordering tags have done so. Producers in the Modified Accredited zone have been required to use electronic ID for three-and-a-half years and have already used more than 260,000 tags.

Any producer who ordered tags in early January that have not yet arrived are advised to contact Animal Industry Division immediately.

"We had a computer glitch at MDA, so if you've ordered tags more than two months ago and haven't received them, we need you to call the MDA Animal Industry Division at (517) 373-1077," Kevin says. "That's our direct line to deal with order delays. Frankly, we lost some orders, so please call that number."

To order tags for the first time, call (866) 870-5136. Producers also can order tags through the Dairy Herd Improvement (DHI). You can also order tags at [www.michigan.gov/mda](http://www.michigan.gov/mda) or [www.michigananimalid.com](http://www.michigananimalid.com). The tags cost \$2 each.

Producers who have not yet ordered tags are requested to do so

as soon as possible to avoid a last-minute backlog.

## Tagging

The last-minute rush to have cattle tagged before leaving the farm has caused some frustration, but following a few pointers will help those tagging the cows have an easier time. Kevin advises producers to place the RFID tag on the inside of the left ear.

"We suggest tagging the animal near the base of the head, which gives the tag more protection," Kevin says.

When tagging animals, Kevin reminds producers to make sure the entire tag is locked together. Due to the thickness of the tags, several people have reported assuming the two pieces locked together without checking only to find out later the tag has fallen out. Another culprit of a disappearing tag is twine on round bales. The tags can get caught on the twine, which can rip the tags right out. At \$2 per tag, farmers can reduce replacement costs by following Kevin's tips.

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