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Goats: identification, records and movement

In the guide

Import / export
Before moving goats to your holding
Notification of holdings
When should I identify my goats?
What can I identify my goats with?
Goats born or identified since 31 December 2009
Goats born or identified before 31 December 2009
Replacing identification
- Goats with an EID bolus
- Goats with a tattoo
- Historic flock

Where do I record my animal movements and who do I report them to?
Recording movements and other information in the holding register
- Individually
- Batch recording
- Mixed batch recording

Recording movements in the movement document
How do I record the individual numbers?
What is central point recording?
Further information
Trading Standards
In this update
Key legislation

To fully understand this guidance, it is important to note the difference between the United Kingdom and Great Britain:

- UK: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland
- GB: England, Scotland and Wales

In this guide, the words 'must' or 'must not' are used where there is a legal requirement to do (or not do) something. The word 'should' is used where there is established legal guidance or best practice that is likely to help you avoid breaking the law.

This guidance is for England

Goats that were born or identified on or after 31 December 2009, and are not intended for slaughter within 12 months of birth, must be double-identified and individually recorded in your herd register.

Goat movements are documented using the Livestock Information Service (LIS).

When moving these animals they must be recorded individually on your movement document*, in paper or electronic form, unless you are moving them between premises that are part of your main holding and within a 10-mile radius of your 'point of business' (usually the postal address of your main animal handling point) or you move them through a central point recording centre (CPRC).

[*LIS-1, which can be downloaded from the Livestock Information website (scroll down the linked web page to access the form).]

Individually identified goats will generally be your breeding stock but may also be goats you keep for whatever reason (including as pets) beyond 12 months of age.

There are different rules for goats destined for slaughter within 12 months of birth. More information on slaughter animals is available on the GOV.UK website.

Import / export

For information on moving goats into and out of GB, see the guidance on 'Importing animals' and 'Exporting animals'.

You will need to be aware of the identification requirements regarding the GB prefix on ear tags (covered in the exporting guide).

Before moving goats to your holding

If you want to keep goats you will first require a county parish holding (CPH) number, which identifies the land where they will be kept. Details of how to apply for a CPH number are available on the GOV.UK website.

Notification of holdings

An occupier of a holding who begins to keep goats on that holding, and any person who takes over the occupation of a holding where goats are kept, must notify the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) of their name and address, and the address of the holding. This must be done within one month. APHA should be contacted on 0300 020 0301 or customer.registration@apha.gov.uk. They will provide you with your herd number at this stage.

You must also notify APHA, within one month, if you stop keeping goats.

When should I identify my goats?

Kids born on your holding must be identified within the following timescales:

- six months of birth if the animals are housed overnight
- nine months of birth if the animals are not housed overnight (kept in 'extensive conditions')

Kids must be identified before they leave their holding of birth (including moves to slaughter, temporary grazing, common grazing, market, etc) whether or not the six / nine months have passed.

Your goats will be rejected if they are not correctly identified when they arrive at a market or abattoir.

What can I identify my goats with?

Goats can be identified with any of the following identification devices:

- ear tags
- tattoos
- pastern tags
- boluses
- injectable electronic identification device (EID) (in groin)

What is used depends on whether the animal is double-identified (two identifiers with the same unique individual identification number) or is a slaughter animal. Double-identified animals are generally not slaughtered before they are 12 months old; slaughter animals are those that are intended for slaughter within 12 months of birth.

More information on the types and combinations of identification devices can be found on the GOV.UK website.

Electronic identification for goats is voluntary. However, if you intend to export then they must be full EID identified. For further details on how to identify your animals please see the GOV.UK website.

Goats born or identified since 31 December 2009

These animals need to be double-identified with two non-electronic identification devices (if choosing not to use EID). These can be:

- two ear tags with the same unique 12-digit animal number
- an ear tag and a tattoo with the same unique 12-digit number (UK code and herd number on one ear, individual animal number on the other). The tattoo can go across both ears
- an ear tag and a pastern mark with the same unique 12-digit number
- an injectable EID (in groin) and a black ear tag with a letter 'I' printed on it with the same unique 12-digit animal number

In the case of animals intended for slaughter within 12 months of birth only one single slaughter tag is required with the herd mark printed on it.

Reserved colours for tags, as stated in the Sheep and Goats (Records, Identification and Movement) (England) Order 2009:

- yellow: used only for electronic tag
- black: used only for ear tags where the goat has an EID bolus or an EID injectable
- red: used only for replacement tags (including replacement electronic tags)

Goats born or identified before 31 December 2009

Before 1 January 2001 goats did not need to be identified with a permanent mark. Between 1 January 2001 and 31 January 2003 goats were identified with a UK herd mark tag, which did not have an individual number. Since 9 July 2005 all goats have been required to be individually identified.

If any of these older animals have not been identified or have lost their identification and are to be moved, you must identify them with two identification devices that have the same individual number. Both forms of identification must hold the same 12-digit number (the 12-digit number consists of your flock number and an individual number specific to that animal only).

Where an animal identified before 31 December 2009 is not identified with an individual number, a keeper must re-identify it before moving it from their holding. This must be done using one of the means of identification listed above. If the animal is not on its holding of birth, the keeper must cross-reference the old and new identification numbers in the holding register.

Replacing identification

If your goat loses its identification device, or it becomes impossible to read, you must replace the device within the following timescales (whichever comes first):

- no later than 28 days after the tag was removed or discovered to be lost or illegible (either visually or electronically)
- before the goat is moved from your holding

Whenever you apply replacements, you must make a record of this in the replacement section of the holding register.

Replacement tags for slaughter animals:

- apply a new slaughter tag
- if animal is not on the holding of birth the tag must be red

Goats with an EID bolus

Any replacement ear tag or pastern tag must have the same animal identification number and must be black. If the bolus fails or cannot be read, the animal should be re-identified using an ear tag or pastern tag; you should not insert a new bolus.

Goats with a tattoo

If the goat has a tattoo and loses its other identifier, the replacement identifier must have the same number as the tattoo. If the tattoo becomes illegible, it should be replaced with a conventional ear tag.

Note: tattoos are not suitable for use for export.

Historic flock

Animals identified before 31 December 2009 are known as the 'historic flock'. The individual tag numbers of the historic flock must be recorded on the movement document unless the move is direct to slaughter. If you have to replace an ear tag on a historic-flock animal, you may wish to consider replacing both ear tags with a new pair that include EID. This is not a legal requirement, but it will make it possible to gather your animals' individual identification numbers using scanning equipment and is recommended by Defra and industry bodies.

Where do I record my animal movements and who do I report them to?

When an animal moves, its movement must be reported (on-movements) or notified (off-movements) to LIS within three days, using one of the following methods:

- if you use a farm management package that has been updated, it will automatically report sheep and goat movements on to the LIS system
- if you have internet access, you can report moves on the LIS website
- if neither of the above are appropriate, you can use a quadruplicate paper LIS-1 form. The address is: Livestock Information Service, c/o Defra, PO Box 407, Worksop, S80 9HP. Do not send completed forms to your local authority

The movement must also be recorded in the holding register.

The only exceptions are as follows:

- when an animal that remains under your keepership moves to a piece of land that is registered under the same CPH number as your 'point of business' and is within a 10-mile radius of it
- where an animal is moved to a veterinary practice
- when an animal is moved to common land that borders the holding and is officially linked to the holding.
- when an animal is moved on foot to adjacent land that has a different CPH number but is not used for any other livestock. See the GOV.UK website for further information on how to keep a holding register
- movements between land / buildings associated with your main holding and any temporary land association (TLA). For further information on TLAs see the GOV.UK website

Recording movements and other information in the holding register

The keeper can choose in which format to keep a holding register, as long as it contains the required information and a copy can be provided when requested. Options include:

- a paper record
- a spreadsheet
- using the holding register function in farm management software
- use the LIS system to keep an online holding register – it will automatically update when a report is made of animal animal movements to a holding that also uses LIS

A PDF version of the holding register is available on the GOV.UK website.

Keepers must maintain a holding register, which must include the name of the registered keeper, address of the holding to which the register relates, the CPH number, flock number, species (sheep, goats or other), type of production (for example, meat, wool, milk), and the address of the keeper.

Once a year, on 1 December, you must record the total number of goats present on your holding.

The application of replacement ear tags, of ear tags to young previously unidentified animals (and their year of birth) and any deaths must be recorded within 36 hours. On the death of an animal you must record the animal's identification as well as the month and year of death.

You must record the individual identification numbers for full EID-identified animals when the animal is first identified, moves to another holding or dies. You must also make a record of the breed (if known).

Slaughter animals' movements are always recorded as a batch or mixed batch (you only need to record the herd numbers of the animals being moved).

For animals born or identified before 31 December 2009, you never have to record individual identification numbers in the holding register and can continue to batch record them. However, printouts of individual numbers relating to such animals, provided by a CPRC, should be cross-referenced with batch movements in your holding register. For more information on CPRCs, see 'What is central point recording?' below.

For off-movements, the keeper may retain a duplicate copy of the LIS-1 document in chronological order with the holding register, instead of entering the movement into the holding register.

For off-movements, keepers are also required to keep a record of the transporter and the vehicle's registration.

On-movements must always be recorded in the holding register.

Movements must be recorded in the holding register within 36 hours of the movement taking place, or within 48 hours if the animals have been moved to or from a CPRC.

Holding registers, along with movement documents kept as part of the register, must be kept for three years after the last day when an animal referred to on the document dies or leaves the holding.

More information on how to keep a holding register is available on the GOV.UK website.

The examples below show the different ways of recording goat movements.

Individually

This is where you record the individual identification number of each animal. It applies to double-identified animals only. For example:

Date	Number of animals moved	Herd mark / individual ID number	CPH / location animals arrived from
01/10/2024	1	UK0123456 00001	01/001/1234
02/10/2024	5	UK0123456 00002 to 00006	01/001/1234

Batch recording

This is where you only record the total number of animals moved. It is used for slaughter animals, animals identified before 31 December 2009 and for moves through a CPRC that is providing you with the individual numbers. For example:

Date	Number of animals moved	Herd mark	CPH / location animals arrived from
04/10/2024	50	UK0123456	01/001/1234

Mixed batch recording

This is where animals moving in batches have different herd marks. You must record the number of animals that have the same herd mark. It applies to slaughter animals only. For example:

Date	Number of animals moved	Herd mark	CPH / location animals arrived from
06/10/2024	35	UK0123456	01/001/1234
	15	UK0654321	

Note: the leading zeroes in the herd marks in the above tables are only necessary for full EID-identified animals.

Recording movements in the movement document

The LIS-1 document needs to be completed each time animals move to a different holding.

Moves can be recorded and reported in the movement document in two ways: individual recording and batch recording.

Slaughter animals should be recorded on a batch basis.

Double-identified goats born or identified since 31 December 2009 must be recorded individually on your movement document (LIS-1, in paper form or electronically) unless you are moving animals within the 10-mile rule or to slaughter (direct or through a market), which continue to be batch reported.

You need to record individual identification numbers for goats that were identified before 31 December 2009 on the movement document. The exception to this is moves to slaughter (direct or through a market), which continue to be batch reported.

How do I record the individual numbers?

For individual recording, it is up to you to decide whether to read and record an animal's individual identification number yourself as it moves off your holding or use a CPRC to electronically read and record the numbers on EID goats on your behalf. By using a CPRC you avoid having to individually record animals as they move off the holding.

What is central point recording?

This is where animals with electronic identifiers have their individual identification numbers read and recorded on behalf of a keeper by a CPRC, such as an approved market or abattoir. You can check with the market or abattoir to find out if it is an approved CPRC.

Further information

Extra information for goat keepers, including examples and scenarios, can be found on the GOV.UK website.

For information on the welfare of goats when they are being transported, see 'Welfare of animals during transport'.

Trading Standards

For more information on the work of Trading Standards services - and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law - please see 'Trading Standards: powers, enforcement and penalties'.

In this update

Updated the Livestock Information Service's address.

Last reviewed / updated: July 2025

Key legislation

- Animal Health Act 1981
- Sheep and Goats (Records, Identification and Movement) (England) Order 2009

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links go to the legislation.gov.uk website. The site usually updates the legislation to include any amendments made to it. However, this is not always the case. Information on all changes made to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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