

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Why Tagging Matters

No, I'm not talking about tagging someone in a Facebook post. I'm talking about why tagging matters for sheep and goat producers. Tagging is one of the easiest methods of identification for sheep and goats and helps us, as producers, keep accurate records. When I was growing up, I always marveled at how my friend and mentor, who raised dairy goats, could tell all her white goats apart and call them by name, even with a herd of 100. For those like me who do not have the talent to keep track of which animal has the small tan spot to tell it apart from the other white goats in the herd, tagging is an easy way to keep track of who is who, who belongs to whom, and who was treated last week.

Earlier this month, a sheep in Oregon was confirmed to have Scrapie. While it is unfortunate to have a case of Scrapie found in the U.S., it serves as a good reminder of why it is important to follow the identification guidelines from the National Scrapie Eradication Program. To be declared scrapie-free, the U.S. has to go seven years without having a case of Scrapie. Before the Organ case, it had been five years since a case of Scrapie was found in the U.S. Being declared Scrapie-free will open up more export opportunities for sheep and goat producers, strengthening the sheep and goat market. A key part of the National Scrapie Eradication Program is the identification guidelines, requiring official identification for sheep and goats moving through commercial channels. Many fairs also require sheep and goats to have scrapie tags to be shown. Getting a premise ID number is the first step for getting Scrapie tags. To get a premise ID number, call 1-866-USDA-Tag. New producers can also receive their first 100 tags free of charge by calling this number.

Tagging lambs and kids with Scrapie tags is a great way for producers to keep more accurate records and meet the requirements of the National Scrapie Eradication Program. Once producers have a premise ID, they can order Scrapie tags in various sizes and colors from many livestock supply companies. And as an added bonus, if a 4-H or FFA member purchases a sheep or goat to show at the county fair, it will already have a scrapie tag to meet the fair rules.

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