

# Unit C: Field Records

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## LESSON 4: SHEEP PRODUCTION AND RECORD KEEPING

# Terms

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- **Culling**
- **Ear notch**
- **RFID**

# Why is record keeping in sheep production important?

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**Maintaining performance records for your flock is one of the best management tools you can use to increase the efficiency of your operation.**

- **Many types of records have a direct effect on profitability of the flock. All producers should keep some type of records.**
- **Monitor basic statistics to indicate flock productivity.**

# Why is record keeping in sheep production important?

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- Keeping individual records also helps to keep track of medically treated animals.
- Records can also be used when making culling decisions. **Culling** is the removal of an animal, especially a sick or weak one, from a herd or flock.
- Some type of animal identification must be used.

# What are the methods of animal identification in sheep production?

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**Record keeping is an important aspect of sheep production.**

- **Record keeping begins with animal identification.**
  - **Permanent:** the form of animal identification chosen must be permanent so the animal can be identified throughout its entire life.
  - **Resistant to loss or tearing:** many forms of identification can be lost or torn from the animal's ear. Be sure to choose the form that is most resistant.
  - **Easy to read from a distance:** in some cases, it is most convenient to look at a group of animals from a distance and still read the animal's identification.
  - **Easy to apply:** whatever form of identification chosen must be simple for the producer to apply.
  - **Provide information wanted:** some producers appreciate more than just an animal identification number. Such information includes birth date, sire, dam, type of birth, etc.

# What are the methods of animal identification in sheep production?

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- Some may choose to ear tag, and in some cases, double tag their animals to offset the advantages and disadvantages of the different sizes and designs.
  - Brass
    - ✦ Ideal for small or newborn lambs
    - ✦ Lightweight
    - ✦ Difficult to read



# What are the methods of animal identification in sheep production?

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- **Plastic**

- Easier to read without catching the animal
- Assorted colors
- Pre-stamped with numbers or blank
- Relatively high loss rate



- **DNA tags**

- Remove ear tissue during tagging and store in a sealed, labeled tube for later use

# What are the methods of animal identification in sheep production?

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- **Placement**
  - Between the middle and lower cartilage of the ear
  - Far enough out to allow for future growth
  - Different ears for different birth type, sex of lamb, breed, or sire. Some producers give information listed just by placement of tag.
- **Provide other information**
  - First number – animal's birth year
  - Different colors for different years, breeds, sires, or owners
  - Name or prefix of owner can be written on the tag.



# What are the methods of animal identification in sheep production?

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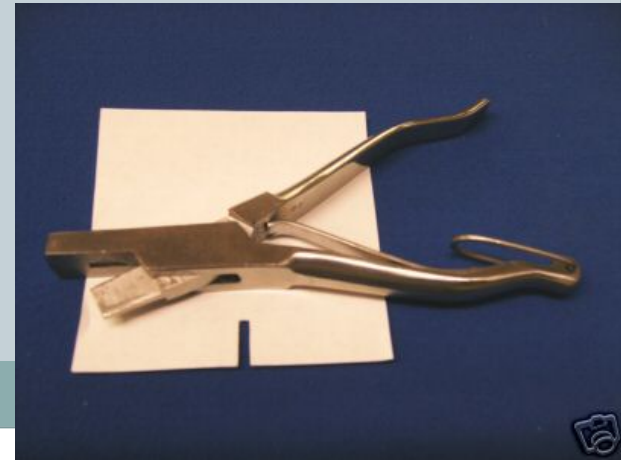
- Tattoos are the most permanent form of animal identification
- Numbers and letters are made of needles which puncture small holes in the ears
- Ink is then applied to the holes so the numbers and letters are readable
- Disadvantage – difficult to read from a distance



# What are the methods of animal identification in sheep production?

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- Some producers may choose to ear notch their lambs.
- An ear notch is a small V-shaped notch placed somewhere in the ear
- May be used in a universal coding system or one specific to that production facility
- Used for simple differentiation and read from a distance, with some practice



# What are the methods of animal identification in sheep production?

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- Electronic identification is becoming increasingly popular
- RFID (radio frequency identification) technology is rapidly growing
  - Electronic ear tags – microchip and coiled copper antenna is in a standard plastic ear tag
  - Microchips can be implanted under the skin of an animal or ingested by the animal. A microchip is an electronic chip with a miniature radio transponder and antenna



# What are the methods of animal identification in sheep production?

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- **Paint brands are used for quick identification**
  - Many producers will paint brand lambs with their parent's number
  - Heavy applications should be avoided to keep a high quality of wool
- **Paintsticks, chalks, and sprays have been created in different colors to assist in quick identification.**
  - These are often used on the back or head
  - This method of identification is often used to mark animals that are bred or may not be bred, have been vaccinated or have not, need to be sorted from the group or not, etc.

# Temporary Identification

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# What types of record keeping system are used in sheep production?

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- Some use very few points of information, while others are very in depth.
- When choosing a record keeping system, the producer must keep all production goals in mind.
- Before a record keeping system is put to use, the user must understand the information being asked for

# What types of record keeping system are used in sheep production?

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- Sire and dam
- Lambing date
- Sex of lambs
- ID of lambs
- Lambing ease
- Mothering ability
- Vigor of the lambs
- Birth weights of lambs
- Weaning weights
- 120-day weights
- Other records to meet production goals

# Review/Summary

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- **Why is record keeping in sheep production important?**
- **What are the methods of animal identification in sheep production?**
- **What types of record keeping systems are used in sheep production? How do you complete record keeping forms used in sheep production?**