



NLIS and identification – cattle and buffalo

Summary

Identification of livestock is required by law under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management (Identification and Movement of Stock and Apiaries) Regulations 2013 [BAM (IMSA) Regulations].

The regulations also require the use of the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS).

Identifying your livestock assists in maintaining Australia's biosecurity systems that assure trading partners of our ability to trace disease and residue issues effectively. It also deters theft and assists in recovering stolen animals.

Where cattle are mentioned, buffalo are inferred unless specified.

Owners must register

All cattle owners must be registered with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD).

On registration you will be issued registered identifiers (stock brand, earmark and pig tattoo) and a property identification code (PIC) for the property where the animals are kept. A PIC card is issued that lists the properties that the owner has nominated to run stock on and the registered identifiers for use with the stock.

For more information, see the following publications:

- [Livestock ownership, identification and movement in Western Australia](#)
- [Registering as an owner of stock](#)
- [Application for registration as an owner of stock](#)

Identification requirements

Cattle in Western Australia must be identified with the registered brand or earmark as listed on your PIC card and with an NLIS device.

Registered stock brand – two letters and one number

Your registered brand consists of two letters and a number. One of the letters may be 'lazy' that is, lying on its side to the left.

- A brand must measure at least 150mm long and 50mm high.
- Freeze or fire brand on left rump or shoulder.
- Firebrands can be applied to horns of buffalo, but not cattle.
- Animals should only be branded by an experienced operator.

Registered earmark – combination of two shaped notches

When the registered earmark is used, it must be applied to the ear nominated on your PIC card and in the correct locations. The appearance will alter if it is applied to the ear from a different position, for example, from behind the ear instead of from the front.

- Males and females will be earmarked in the same ear.
- The earmark must be at least 12mm in height at its maximum point.
- Approved earmarking pliers must be used which are available from rural suppliers or online directly from the manufacturers.

Spayed Females

In addition to the above requirements, spayed females must also be marked with a 20-40mm diameter circular hole in the ear not designated for the earmark.

NLIS – Electronic devices

The BAM (IMSA) Regulations underpin the NLIS, requiring cattle to have an approved NLIS electronic device.

NLIS identification can be either an accredited electronic device fitted to the ear, or a rumen bolus, which is inserted into the reticulum. The bolus comes with an ear tag to indicate its presence. The device enables individual cattle or buffalo to be tracked from property of birth to slaughter or export.

- An NLIS ear device or rumen bolus tag is always fitted to the animal's right ear.
- A white (breeder) device should be fitted to cattle before moving from their property of birth.
- An orange (post-breeder) device should be fitted to cattle without an existing NLIS device when leaving a property other than where they were born.
- Only one device is required as its details are updated on the database as ownership/location changes.

South West land division

Cattle in the South West land division must be branded or earmarked before they are moved from the property or before they reach six months of age, whichever occurs first. They must also be fitted with an NLIS electronic device before being moved from the property.

Outside the South West land division

Cattle outside the South West land division must be branded or earmarked before they are moved from the property or before they reach 18 months of age, whichever occurs first. They must also be fitted with an NLIS electronic device before being moved from the property.

Identification exemptions

- Unweaned calves if moved with their correctly identified mother between properties with the same PIC do not need to be identified.
- The Bam (IMSA) Regulations allow an approved breed society mark to be used instead of the owner's registered brand or earmark. Breed societies must have their preferred identification approved by the Registrar of Stock and Apiaries before using this option. All stock must still meet NLIS requirements and display an NLIS electronic device.
- Some cattle can be too difficult to handle. A permit can be issued by DPIRD to move the animal somewhere to be:
 - safely identified
 - moved for slaughter
 - moved for sale for slaughter only.

This permit is conditional on the destination manager accepting the stock under permit and the stock involved being clearly identified with a paint brand.

Introduced cattle and buffalo

Purchased or introduced cattle that are already branded or earmarked do not have to be re-identified; you must have documentation to show ownership.

If owners wish to re-brand newly acquired stock, their registered brand must be applied immediately below the existing brand.

Purchased or introduced stock not branded or earmarked (that is, from interstate) must be identified with the new owner's brand or earmark within 14 days of arrival.

Important disclaimer

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.

If cattle do not have an NLIS device, a device of the appropriate colour should be fitted:

- White if on the property of birth.
- Orange if not on the property of birth.
- Orange if any doubt about it being on the property of birth.

It is illegal to remove or replace NLIS devices unless they are not functioning. Make sure the scanner is fully charged and operational before removing devices that do not scan.

Identification equipment

- Equipment for applying the registered brand or earmark must not be removed from the property/ies with the PIC they are registered to without a permit from DPIRD.
- NLIS electronic devices registered to a specific PIC can only be applied to animals while on the property registered to that PIC unless a permit has been issued by an inspector.
- NLIS electronic devices cannot be taken to a saleyard or similar facilities to be applied to cattle unless a permit has been issued by an inspector.
- NLIS devices cannot be sold privately; contact the WA Cattle NLIS Helpdesk on 0427 089 860 if you have surplus devices.
- All identification equipment can be purchased through rural suppliers or online directly from the manufacturers.

Scanning Wands

Scanning wands are recommended to record NLIS electronic device numbers accurately and safely. Wands scan the character code, which can then be uploaded directly onto the NLIS database. Wands are available for hire from some Community Resource Centres.

Moving cattle or buffalo

Cattle or buffalo must not be moved off a property without having either a brand or an earmark, an NLIS electronic device and a completed waybill or equivalent (NVD/Waybill).

The movement to a different PIC must be updated on the NLIS database within 48 hours of arrival at that PIC. These requirements ensure that animals can be traced in the event of disease outbreak or chemical residue incident.

The waybill provides proof that stock is being moved with the owner's consent and it must remain with the stock while they are being transported. The documents must be kept for seven years.

To be able to access the commercially preferred National Vendor Declaration waybills, you must become accredited with the Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) program. Contact 1800 683 111 or go online to the [Meat & Livestock Australia](#) website.

For more information about the movement of livestock refer to the webpage: [Moving livestock in Western Australia](#).

NLIS database

Cattle arriving on a PIC must have their NLIS device scanned and transferred to the new PIC on the NLIS database within 48 hours of arrival. This is the responsibility of the receiver of the stock. They do not have to physically do it themselves, but they must ensure it is done.

If cattle are bought from a saleyard or public auction, such as a trade show, on-farm bull sale or clearing sale, the saleyard operators will transfer the stock to the buyer's PIC.

Important disclaimer

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.

This is the one instance where the receiver does not have to do the transfer, but they should check and confirm that it has been done.

Offences under the BAM (IMSA) Regulations 2013

- Possessing stock that are not legally identified
- Using another person's registered brand or earmark
- Possessing another person's registered branding or earmarking equipment
- Applying your earmark, brand or NLIS device to animals on another person's property
- Using another person's NLIS electronic devices
- Removing NLIS identification
- Trading or moving animals without correct NLIS identification
- Failure to transfer animals on the NLIS database after movement to a different PIC

The penalty for a breach of this legislation may be a fine of up to \$20 000.

Contact

For any information or assistance, please contact the WA Cattle NLIS Helpdesk
1300 926 547 or 0427 089 860
Email: cattle.nlis@dpird.wa.gov.au

Important disclaimer

The Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development and the State of Western Australia accept no liability whatsoever by reason of negligence or otherwise arising from the use or release of this information or any part of it.

