# Mississippi State University Extension Service

## Animal Identification Process for Mississippi Junior Livestock Shows

### Background

For over a decade, Mississippi Junior Livestock Shows used retinal imaging to document animal identification (ID). In recent years, an alternative animal ID process was requested to save on time and travel necessitated by the retinal image process. In April 2019, the UDSA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) announced a new process of requiring RFID tags for animals in shows and exhibitions. To be proactive, the Mississippi Livestock Show directors approved the use of 840 USDA official electronic identification (EID) tags in matched sets as our animal ID process. This publication describes the entire ear-tagging process and how the tags will be used in our livestock nomination process. *Note: This ear-tagging process replaces retinal imaging of livestock.*

### Ear Tag Order Form

In several junior livestock shows, animals are shown by weight and are identified by ear tags sold through the Extension 4-H livestock specialist’s office in the MSU Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences (ADS). The following shows require that an ear tag be purchased from ADS for each animal to be nominated by junior exhibitors.

* Market steers *(must be nominated for State Fair and Dixie National Junior Roundup in August)*
* Commercial beef heifers *(two nomination periods, one for State Fair and one for DNJR)*
* Market lambs *(must be nominated for State Fair and Dixie National Junior Roundup in August)*
* Wether dams *(two nomination periods, one for State Fair and one for Dixie National Junior Roundup)*
* Market goats *(must be nominated for State Fair and Dixie National Junior Roundup in August)*
* Commercial meat goat does *(two nomination periods, one for State Fair and one for Dixie National Junior Roundup)*
* Market hogs *(two nomination periods, one for State Fair and one for Dixie National Junior Roundup)*
* MS bred barrows *(Dixie National Junior Roundup only)*
* Commercial gilts *(Dixie National Junior Roundup only)*

The ear tag order should be mailed to the Extension 4-H livestock specialist along with a check for the total price of the tags. There is typically an ear tag order deadline in early August for all livestock to be nominated and exhibited at that year’s Mississippi State Fair. Another ear tag order form is emailed after the Mississippi State Fair for the new livestock that are eligible to be nominated and exhibited at that year’s Dixie National Junior Roundup. All ear tag order forms should be accompanied by a check written to **4-H Livestock Show Foundation**.

As stated above, Mississippi Junior Livestock Shows will use the 840 USDA official EID tags in matched sets for our animal ID process for the 2019–2020 show season. A major change from the ear tags used in previous years is that there is one type of tag for all beef cattle (steers and commercial beef heifers), one type of tag for all sheep and meat goats, and one type of tag for all hogs (market hogs, Mississippi bred barrows, and commercial gilts). Simply enter the number of beef cattle tags, sheep/meat goat tags, and/or market hog tags needed.

### Description of the 840 EID Ear Tags

The USDA 840 EID ear tags are important for animal traceability purposes. This tagging system follows the requirements of the animal disease traceability (ADT) framework for both visual and electronic identification, and the tags are recognized in a standardized information system between federal, state, and industry officials. Because Mississippi is using these tags, the Extension 4-H livestock specialist must report to the Mississippi state veterinarian who gets each tag (more will be explained about this later). The USDA 840 tags in a matched pair consist of an EID button with a matching visual ID ear tag. Each 840 tag contains 15 digits and begins with the numbers 840 (the USA country code), while the remaining 12 digits on the tag are unique to the individual animal. Note that both the male and female parts of the EID tag contain the US shield. On the male portion of the EID tag, notice that it is unlawful to remove this tag. The electronic piece is in the center of the female portion of the tag.

### Mississippi Junior Livestock Show Ear Tag System

When you purchase ear tags, you will receive them in strips that are perforated. Each strip will contain the visual tag paired with the EID button and back. You, as an Extension agent or FFA advisor, are responsible for tagging all animals in your club or chapter. Read the note on the bottom of the ear tag order form.

For all ear tags, you should use the Allflex Red Total Tagger. Other brands of taggers will not work with this set of tags. You can purchase this tagger at most animal health stores. You can also purchase the Allflex Red Total Tagger online. It is recommended that you purchase two Allflex Red Total Taggers so you can leave the black insert in one tagger and out of the other tagger. Note the following reminders about when to use this tagger.

1. When you are inserting any visual tag into livestock (beef cattle, sheep/meat goats, or swine), you can use the tagger with the black insert.
2. When you are inserting an EID tag for sheep/meat goats or swine, you ***must*** use the tagger ***with*** the black insert.
3. When you are inserting an EID tag for beef cattle, you ***must*** use the tagger with the black insert ***removed***. The reason is that the EID tag for beef cattle is larger and thicker than the EID tag for sheep/meat goats and swine, so the black insert must be removed for the beef cattle EID tag to be properly inserted.

### How to Insert Visual and EID Tags for Sheep/Meat Goats

1. Be sure to use the Allflex Red Total Tagger ***with the black clip in place*** for inserting visual and EID tags for sheep/meat goats.
2. Remember that the visual tag with the larger last four digits must be inserted in the outside of the animal’s left ear, and the smaller EID tag must be inserted in the inside of the animal’s right ear.
3. Loading the tagger with a visual or EID tag for sheep/meat goats:
   * To load the tagger with a visual tag for sheep/meat goats, depress the spring clip with the black clip in place and insert the green female visual tag. Slip the green male part of the tag on the red applicator pin. Squeeze the handle of the tagger to make sure the male and female parts of the tag are in alignment. The visual tag goes on the outside of the left ear of the sheep/meat goat.
   * To load the tagger with an EID tag for sheep/meat goats, depress the spring clip with the black clip in place and insert the yellow female EID tag. Slip the yellow male part of the tag on the red applicator pin. Squeeze the handle of the tagger to make sure the male and female parts of the tag are in alignment. The EID tag goes on the inside of the right ear of the sheep/meat goat.
4. Before inserting the visual and EID tags for sheep/meat goats, clean the ear where the tag is to be inserted to remove any debris. The ideal location to insert the tag is between the second and third elastic veins in the center of the animal’s ear.
5. Spray the male portion of the tags with a chlorohexidine disinfectant solution diluted in clean water or some other residual wound spray before inserting the tag to reduce the incidence of infection.
6. Grab the ear and apply the tag between the second and third elastic veins in the center of the ear. When the tags are inserted, be sure to grip the taggers firmly so that the tag is properly sealed.
7. Monitor your animal for a few days after application to ensure the ear does not become infected.

### How to Insert Visual and EID Tags for Swine

1. Be sure to use the Allflex Red Total Tagger ***with the black clip in place*** for inserting visual and EID tags for swine.
2. For swine, the visual tag with the larger last four digits should be inserted with the visual tag on the outside of the animal’s left ear, and the smaller EID tag must be inserted in the inside of the animal’s right ear.
3. Loading the tagger with a visual or EID tag for swine:
   * To load the tagger with a visual tag for swine, depress the spring clip with the black clip in place and insert the green female back of the tag (there is no writing on this part). Slip the green male part (with the visual tag number) of the tag on the red applicator pin. Squeeze the handle of the tagger to make sure the male and female parts of the tag are in alignment. The visual tag goes on the outside of the left ear of the swine.
   * To load the tagger with an EID tag for swine, depress the spring clip with the black clip in place and insert the yellow female EID tag. Slip the yellow male part of the tag on the red applicator pin. Squeeze the handle of the tagger to make sure the male and female parts of the tag are in alignment. The EID tag goes on the inside of the right ear of the swine.
4. Before inserting the visual and EID tags for swine, clean the ear where the tag is to be inserted to remove any debris.
5. Spray the male portion of the tags with a chlorohexidine disinfectant solution diluted in clean water or some other residual wound spray before inserting the tag to reduce the incidence of infection.
6. Grab the ear and apply the tag in the correct location as described in item 3. When the tags are inserted, be sure to grip the taggers firmly so that the tag is properly sealed.
7. Monitor your animal for a few days after application to ensure the ear does not become infected.

### How to Insert Visual and EID Tags for Beef Cattle

1. Be sure to use the Allflex Red Total Tagger ***with the black clip in place for inserting visual tags and with the black clip removed from the tagger for EID tags for beef cattle***. It is recommended that you purchase two taggers so you can keep one with the black clip in place and one with the black clip removed.
2. Remember that the visual tag with the larger last four digits must be inserted in the inside middle of the animal’s left ear, and the smaller EID tag must be inserted in the inside of the animal’s right ear toward the middle portion of the ear.
3. Loading the tagger with a visual or EID tag for beef cattle:
   * To load the tagger with a visual tag for beef cattle, depress the spring clip with the black clip in place and insert the green female visual tag. Slip the green male part of the tag on the red applicator pin. Squeeze the handle of the tagger to make sure the male and female parts of the tag are in alignment. The visual tag goes toward the middle of the inside of the left ear of beef cattle.
   * To load the tagger with an EID tag for beef cattle, depress the spring clip ***with the black clip removed*** and insert the yellow female EID tag. Slip the yellow male part of the tag on the red applicator pin. Squeeze the handle of the tagger to make sure the male and female parts of the tag are in alignment. The EID tag goes on the inside of the right ear of beef cattle.
4. Before inserting the visual and EID tags for beef cattle, clean the ear where the tag is to be inserted to remove any debris. The ideal location to insert the tag is between the second and third elastic veins in the center of the animal’s ear.
5. Spray the male portion of the tags with a chlorohexidine disinfectant solution diluted in clean water or some other residual wound spray before inserting the tag to reduce the incidence of infection.
6. Grab the ear and apply the tag between the second and third elastic veins in the center of the ear. When the tags are inserted, be sure to grip the taggers firmly so that the tag is properly sealed. (The photo below depicts the recommended site (red circle) for inserting a visual tag in the left ear of cattle. You would use the same strategy to insert an EID tag in the right ear of cattle.)
7. Monitor your animal for a few days after application to ensure the ear does not become infected.

### Use of Nomination Forms to Complete Online Entries

Once your livestock are properly tagged, it is critical to properly complete nomination forms for each animal. Write the four-digit visual ear tag number, followed by the complete 15-digit USDA 840 number. The other area of importance is the physical location where the animal is maintained. When nomination forms are submitted to each Extension office, the Extension agent will complete the process by entering each animal in the Extension Intranet Online Livestock Show Entry Program. This year, Extension agents will enter the four-digit visual ear tag number, the complete 15-digit USDA 840 number, and the physical location where the animal is maintained. All of this information will be downloaded by the Extension 4-H livestock specialist and submitted to the state veterinarion for disease traceability purposes.

### Lost Visual or EID Ear Tags

The USDA 840 EID tags from Allflex are tamper-proof tags, and it is unlawful to remove the tag. It is possible for an animal’s visual tag to be ripped out of its ear accidentally (by another animal, from the animal catching its ear on something, or some similar situation). If this happens, the Extension agent should visually inspect the animal to verify that it has been lost. The agent must notify the Extension 4-H livestock specialist so that a generic visual tag can be issued for that animal; this generic tag will be linked to the EID tag number in the database. The new visual tag will have a code printed on it, and the Extension 4-H livestock specialist will write the four-digit number on the visual tag before it is mailed to be placed in the animal’s ear by the Extension agent. If an EID tag is lost but the visual tag is still present, the animal will be administered a new set of a visual tag with a matched EID tag. These new numbers will be updated on the animal’s nomination form and in the online entry system.

### Animals with Existing EID Tags

The USDA 840 EID tags from Allflex are tamper-proof tags, and it is unlawful to remove them. If you have an exhibitor whose show animal has an EID tag already in place, do not remove the existing EID tag. The Extension agent or FFA advisor should record this EID number on the nomination form and report this to the Extension 4-H livestock specialist. A generic visual tag can be issued for that animal with a four-digit number that will be linked to the existing EID tag number for that animal. This four-digit visual tag number will be entered on the nomination form and in the online entry program to update that animal’s entry.

### Conclusion

For the 2019–2020 Mississippi Livestock Show Season, we will use the 840 USDA Official EID tags in a matched set for our animal ID purposes to replace retinal imaging. Following these steps will ensure that your county’s livestock are properly tagged and nominated for upcoming state junior livestock shows in Mississippi.

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By **Dean Jousan**, PhD, Associate Extension Professor and 4-H Livestock Specialist, Casey Moss, student worker, and Alicia Gilmore, MS student, Animal and Dairy Sciences.

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