

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 USDA 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 an 840 USDA Official (All-in-One) EID ear tag matched set for all market or commercial animals that must be purchased through the State 4-H Livestock Office as our animal ID process. For commercial dairy goats, an 840 microchip can be inserted into the webbing of the tail in place of the 840 All-in-One EID ear tag. This publication describes the ear-tagging process and how the tags will be used in our livestock nomination process.

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, market lambs, market hair sheep, and market goats (*must be nominated for State Fair and Dixie National Junior Round-Up in late August/September*)
- Commercial beef heifers, wether dams, breeding hair sheep, commercial meat goat does, market hogs (includes commercial gilts and Mississippi Bred barrows), commercial dairy cattle, and commercial dairy goats (*two nominations, one for State Fair in late August/September and one for DNJR in December*)

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 Round-Up. 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 (All-in-One) EID ear tag matched set for our animal ID process for the 2025–2026 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, commercial beef heifers, commercial dairy cattle), one type of tag for all sheep, meat goats, and commercial dairy goats, and one type of tag for all hogs (market hogs, Mississippi Bred barrows, and commercial gilts). See the box on the 2025–2026 Ear Tag Order Form below.

Before submitting the ear tag order, there are a couple of things to keep in mind about some tags serving more than one purpose. For example, the Magnolia Swine Circuit has purchased some official 840 All-in-One EID tags for their shows, and this tag will also serve as the show tag for pigs that have one of these tags. Similarly, the Mississippi Club Goat Association has Mississippi Bred tags for market goats and commercial meat goat does. In addition, Mississippi Bred sheep (both wool and hair sheep) will have an orange tag that will serve as their Mississippi Bred tag and their official show tag that can be purchased through the Mississippi Sheep Producers Association or the Mississippi Hair Sheep Breeders Association. There is not a Mississippi Bred tag for cattle. Mississippi Bred swine and meat goat tags must be purchased through the Mississippi Pork Producers Association and the Mississippi Club Goat Association, respectively. Currently, they use a separate Mississippi Bred ear tag that must be in the ears of those Mississippi bred animals.

As an Extension agent, once you determine how many tags are needed, simply enter the number of beef/dairy cattle tags, sheep/meat goat tags, dairy goat tags, and/or market hog tags needed.

Date: _____

ADS Use Only: Check # _____

Date Mailed _____

2025 - 2026 Ear Tag Order Form

TO: Extension Agents/Agricultural Education Teachers (All tag orders must go through you.)

FROM: Department of Animal & Dairy Sciences

Please send your order for ear tags by **August 15, 2025**, along with a check for **\$6** per tag (tags will not be mailed without payment) payable to: **4-H Livestock Show Foundation** and mail to: **Dean Jousan, Box 9815, Mississippi State, MS 39762.**

Beef Cattle Tags <i>(market steers/commercial beef heifers)</i>	# needed _____
Dairy Cattle Tags <i>(commercial dairy heifers and cows)</i>	# needed _____
All Sheep/Meat Goat Tags <i>(market lambs; wether dams; market hair sheep; market goats; commercial meat goat does; breeding hair sheep)</i>	# needed _____
Dairy Goat Tags <i>(junior and senior commercial dairy goats)</i>	# needed _____
Market Hog Tags <u>(State Fair only)</u>	# needed _____

Market hog tags, commercial gilts, and MS Bred Barrows for the 2026 Dixie National Junior Round-Up, and tags for new commercial beef heifers, commercial meat goat does, breeding hair sheep, and wether dams, will be ordered after the 2025 MS State Fair.

TAGS SHOULD BE MAILED TO:

Name _____

4-H County/FFA Chapter _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

All tags must be ordered through the Extension Agents or Agricultural Education Teachers. No tags will be mailed to anyone else. If you send personal checks, you will be responsible for any fees or problems with checks.

Extension Agents/Agricultural Education Teachers are to personally tag (or be present at tagging of) each animal to verify that the correct tag goes in the correct animal. Your signature on your file of entries verifies this has been done by the ownership/entry deadline of August 29, 2025, or December 1, 2025.

>>>> DO NOT GIVE OUT TAGS TO INDIVIDUALS FOR TAGGING. <<<<

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 All-in-One EID ear tag in a matched set consists of an EID button and a matching visual ID ear tag that are part of a single 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.

In the following photos, note that both the male and female parts of the EID and visual tags contain the U.S. shield. On the male portion of the visual tags, notice that it is unlawful to remove this tag. The electronic piece is in the raised, center of the female portion of the tag.



Figure 1. Example of strip of swine ear tags and of USDA 840 All-in-One EID ear tag in matched set. Swine ear tags should be inserted in the animal's left ear. The blue tag is the visual tag, which will be inserted into the outer side of the left ear. Note that the 6 digits of the visual tag match the last 6 digits on the yellow 840 EID tag. The yellow EID tag will be inserted in the inner portion of the left ear in the All-in-One EID ear tag in a matched set.



Figure 2. Example of strip of beef/dairy cattle ear tags and of USDA 840 All-in-One EID ear tag in a matched set. Cattle ear tags should be inserted in the animal's left ear. The white tag is the visual tag, which will be inserted into the inner portion of the middle of the ear. Note that the 15 numbers at the top of the visual tag match the 15 numbers on the white 840 EID button.



Figure 3. Example of strip of sheep/meat goat/commercial dairy goat ear tags and of USDA 840 All-in-One EID ear tag in a matched set. Sheep/goat ear tags should be inserted in the animal's left ear. The yellow tag is the visual tag, which will be inserted into the inner portion of the middle of the ear. Note that the 6 numbers at the bottom of the visual tag match the last 6 numbers on the yellow 840 EID button.

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; these are combined to make the All-in-One visual/EID ear tag. You, as an Extension agent or agricultural education teacher, are responsible for tagging all animals in your club or chapter. Read the note on the bottom of the ear tag order form. When inserting the All-in-One tags, they should go in the animal's left ear. For clarity purposes, the left ear is on the left side of the animal when it is viewed from behind. The following pictures are examples of the ear tags being used this year, along with a brief description of them. *Note: The pictures do not reflect the size difference of the visual tag and the EID tag.*

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. Notice in Figure 4 that the left photo has the black insert in the tagger, and the photo on the right has the black insert removed. Because these are All-in-One visual/EID tags, the black insert must be removed when tagging all animals.

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

1. Be sure to use the Allflex Red Total Tagger **with the black clip removed** for inserting the All-in-One visual/EID 840 tag.
2. Remember that the All-in-One visual/EID 840 tag should be inserted in the animal's left ear when viewing the animal from behind.
3. Loading the tagger with the All-in-One EID tag for sheep/meat goats/commercial dairy goats:
 - To load the tagger, depress the spring clip and insert the yellow EID button with the raised portion facing away from the applicator pin. Slip the yellow visual 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/dairy goat.
4. Before inserting the All-in-One visual/EID 840 tag for sheep/meat goats/dairy 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 tag with a chlorhexidine disinfectant solution diluted in clean water or some other

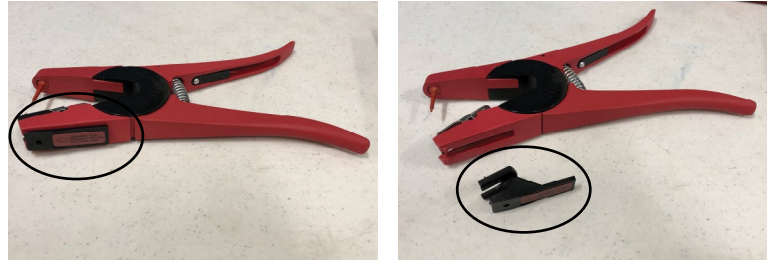


Figure 4. Tagger with black insert (left) and without black insert (right).

residual wound spray before inserting the tag to reduce the incidence of infection.

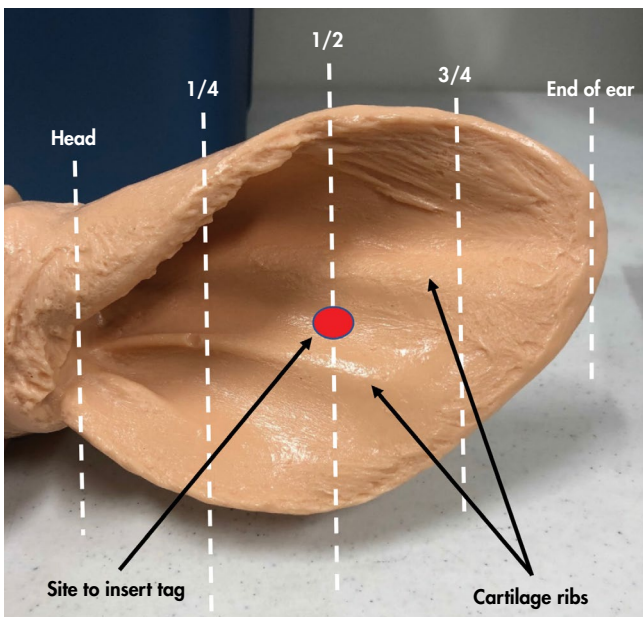
6. Grab the ear and apply the tag between the second and third elastic veins in the center of the ear. When the tag is inserted, be sure to grip the taggers firmly so that the tag is properly sealed.
7. Monitor your animal for a few days after application to ensure the ear does not become infected.

How to Insert Visual and EID Tags for Swine

1. Be sure to use the Allflex Red Total Tagger with the black clip removed for inserting the All-in-One visual/EID 840 tag.
2. Remember that the All-in-One visual/EID 840 tag should be inserted in the animal's left ear when viewing the animal from behind.
3. Loading the tagger with the All-in-One EID tag for swine:
 - To load the tagger, depress the spring clip and insert the yellow EID button with the raised portion facing away from the applicator pin. Slip the blue visual 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.
4. Before inserting the All-in-One visual/EID 840 tag for swine, clean the ear where the tag is to be inserted to remove any debris.
5. Spray the male portion of the tag with a chlorhexidine 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 in the left ear. When the tag is 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 removed** for inserting the All-in-One visual/EID 840 tag.
2. Remember that the All-in-One visual/EID 840 tag should be inserted in the animal's left ear when viewing the animal from behind.
3. Loading the All-in-One EID tag for beef cattle and commercial dairy cattle:
 - To load the tagger, depress the spring clip and insert the white EID button with the raised portion facing away from the applicator pin, which is also the visual tag. Slip the white male portion 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 button with visual tag goes on the inside of the left ear.
4. Before inserting the All-in-One visual/EID 840 tag for beef cattle and commercial dairy 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 chlorhexidine 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 for inserting a visual tag in the left ear of cattle.)
7. Monitor your animal for a few days after application to ensure the ear does not become infected.



Use of 840 Microchips for Commercial Dairy Goats

Commercial dairy goat exhibitors have the option of purchasing the 840 visual/EID combination ear tag from the 4-H Livestock Program, or they can utilize an 840 animal ID microchip. If exhibitors of commercial dairy goats go the 840-microchip route, they should provide their own microchip reader.

Commercial dairy goat exhibitors can purchase the 840 microchips online with the applicator and readers. There are a couple of steps to obtain the information needed to purchase the 840 microchips. First, the exhibitor/farm must have a premise ID number. To get this, you should go to <https://agnet.mdac.ms.gov/MBAHPremises> and complete the online premise ID registration. When a number is assigned, it will be emailed to you. Save this number in your records file, as you will need it again later. The next step is to obtain a flock or scrapie ID number. To get this, you can contact the Mississippi Board of Animal Health at 601-359-1170 and give them your premise ID number. They can contact their person with the USDA to get a flock/scrapie ID number to email to you. Or you can call USDA's toll-free tag line at 866-873-2824 and their staff will assign a flock ID to your flock/herd. If you have any trouble reaching their staff on the national toll-free line, you can contact them by email at scrapie@usda.gov. In your email, please include the state where your dairy goats are located and your phone number. Once you have obtained your premise ID and flock/scrapie ID numbers, you can order the 840 ID animal microchip in varying quantities based on how many commercial dairy goats the exhibitor is seeking to nominate. Since the exhibitor is responsible for the microchip reader, there are different reader options available to them.

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. The following section outlines the area on each nomination form where the animal ID information is to be recorded. This excerpt is from a beef commercial heifer nomination form. Note that the exhibitor should write the visual ear tag number (circled in blue), followed by the complete 15-digit USDA 840 number (circled in red) on the nomination form. The other area of importance is the physical location where the animal is maintained (circled in green). 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 visual ear tag number, the complete 15-digit USDA 840 number, and

the physical location where the animal is maintained. All this information will be downloaded by the Extension 4-H livestock specialist and submitted to the state veterinarian 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 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 verify that it has been lost. The agent must notify the Extension 4-H livestock specialist so that a new All-in-One Visual/EID 840 tag can be issued for that animal. 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 that will be linked to the existing EID tag number for that animal. This 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 2025–2026 Mississippi Livestock Show Season, we will use the 840 USDA Official (All-in-One) EID ear tag matched set for our animal ID purposes for all market and commercial livestock. For commercial dairy goats, an 840 microchip can be inserted into the webbing of the tail in place of the 840 All-in-One EID ear tag. Following these steps will ensure that your county's livestock are properly tagged and nominated for upcoming state junior livestock shows in Mississippi.

COMMERCIAL BEEF HEIFER NOMINATION FORM FOR 2025 MISSISSIPPI STATE FAIR AND 2026 DISTRICT AND DIXIE NATIONAL JUNIOR ROUND-UP LIVESTOCK SHOWS

Instructions: Complete this form in its entirety (including signatures) and return it to your Extension Agent/ Agricultural Education Teacher. Entries must be received by your Extension Office by **August 29, 2025**. All entries must be sent to Dean Jousan, Box 9815, Mississippi State, MS 39762.

Exhibitor's Name _____ Exhibitor's Birth Date _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

County Name/Number _____ 4-H County _____ -OR- _____ FFA Chapter _____

Exhibitor's Ethics Certification Number _____ Premise I.D. Number _____

Visual Ear Tag # _____

Complete USDA 840 # 840

MS Bred: Yes _____ No _____
(Check One) (State of origin of heifer)

Breed Classification of Heifer: (Circle One) English American European

I Plan to Show this Commercial Heifer at: (circle all that apply) State Fair District Show Dixie National Junior Round-Up

Physical Location Where Heifer is Maintained _____

We hereby certify that the above information on the breed of this commercial beef heifer is true and correct to the best of our knowledge. We understand that the final decision as to breed will be determined by the breed classifier(s), regardless of animal characteristics or paperwork submitted, and we are aware there is no appeal.

We agree to feed, fit, and exhibit this commercial beef heifer according to the rules and regulations of the Mississippi State Fair, District Livestock Shows and Dixie National Junior Round-Up, and will not administer any drug or substance to this commercial beef heifer not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), and will abide by all withdrawal times relative to the administration of legal drugs, feed additives, or substances approved by FDA or USDA by the date of the show. Furthermore, we authorize and will consent to having a tissue sample, blood sample, urine specimen, or other bodily excretion drawn from the animal for the purpose of analysis to determine the presence, if any, of illegal drugs or substances.

We agree to allow any employee of the MS Department of Agriculture, Board of Animal Health, Mississippi State University Extension Service, or any agricultural education teacher to inspect the above listed commercial beef heifer at the physical location stated at any given time without advance notice, provided, however, the exhibitor, parent, guardian, or property owner be present. If the animal is not at the physical location given without justifiable cause, the animal is subject to being disqualified on a review of the Rules Committee.

We acknowledge that we understand and agree to abide by the rules and regulations as stated in the official premium books of the Mississippi State Fair, District Livestock Shows and Dixie National Junior Round-Up. We, individually and together, agree to waive all liability of any state, county, or local government officials, employees, or agents thereof, in both their individual and official capacities, as well as the entities of the state, county, and local government, for any injuries, damage or other misfortune that we or our animal may suffer as result of being allowed to participate in this show and events. Further, we, individually and together, agree to indemnify the same parties named in the preceding sentence from all claims, suits, or other legal actions or demands of any nature, which they may suffer as the result of our participation or the participation of our animal in the show and the events.

I permit Mississippi State University's Office of Agricultural Communications to record my, my child's, or my family member's image, voice, or both, and own and use those recordings for educational and publicity purposes. I release Mississippi State University and the Office of Agricultural Communications from any claims that might arise from the use of these recordings. If the subject is under 18, a parent, grandparent or guardian must write the child's name as the exhibitor and grant permission by signing on the appropriate line.

Signature of Exhibitor _____ Date _____ Signature of Parent/Guardian _____

Day Phone _____ Cell Phone _____ Print Name of Parent/Guardian _____

Email address _____

The above exhibitor is a legal and enrolled member of _____ (4-H or FFA) and I certify this exhibitor as far as eligibility. Furthermore, to the best of my knowledge, this commercial beef heifer is entered in the correct breed classification.

Signature of Extension Agent/Agricultural Education Teacher _____

Address _____

City / State / Zip _____

Day Phone _____

(All blanks must be completed, or the form will be returned for completion.)

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