

The Welfare Assessment - CATTLE

The welfare assessment is the second stage of the tag approval process & lasts for 21 days. BCMS ETAS section will inform the applicant if the welfare testing can go ahead after the initial assessment of the tag(s) and applicator.

Where a range of tags with the same fixing mechanism are submitted for approval, Defra will give a view on whether it is necessary for each tag to undergo the welfare assessment. The applicant will be responsible for all costs relating to welfare testing.

After the assessment the applicant should send a copy of the welfare report to BCMS ETAS section. ETAS will study the report & decide if the ear tag can be given the go ahead for PAS testing & inform you in writing.

A welfare assessment must: -

- Take place on at least two farms with one batch of calves being farmed intensively i.e. kept in enclosed buildings or yards (not at grass), the other batch extensively i.e. with access to pasture.
- Include a minimum of 25 calves per batch on each farm. The tags must be inserted within 20 days of birth.
- The number sequence to be used will be allocated by ETAS following the decision by Defra to agree the start of the welfare assessment. Unique tag numbers will be entered on ETAS by BCMS on behalf of the manufacturer. The assessment tag(s) will take the place of the official tag(s) for the duration of the assessment and be allowed to remain in the animal's ear(s) if the tag becomes approved.
- Animals included in the welfare assessment should not be moved from the holding on which the assessment is being carried out. If at any time the number of animals participating in a trial falls below the specified minimum, Defra reserves the right to request a further trial.
- If welfare data provided by another Member State in respect of an application for approval in the UK is deemed to be inadequate, Defra reserves the right to request a further assessment.
- If the tag is not given full approval, the assessment tag may in certain circumstances need to be removed under veterinary supervision and replaced with an approved tag bearing the same unique identification number corresponding with the details held on the farm register and on the cattle passport. Agreement as to which party (the owner of the cattle or the tag manufacturer) should pay for re-tagging should this prove necessary, should be reached before the assessment begins, and should

- be an explicit part of the contract (between a tag manufacturer and a farmer) to supply tags with only provisional approval. In the end it is the cattle keeper's responsibility to ensure that cattle are permanently marked with fully approved tags. Defra will not be liable for this cost.

The tag undergoing assessment must be inserted under the supervision of a veterinary surgeon (paid for by the applicant). The animals must be examined by the veterinary surgeon who supervised the application of the tags at:

- insertion of ear tag
- 7 days post insertion
- 21 days post insertion

At the end of the assessment, the Veterinary Surgeon must submit a report which should contain:

1. Details of the farm enterprise with a description of the environment and husbandry systems in which the calves were kept;
2. An assessment of discomfort and pain at insertion accompanied by a description of the immediate damage (lesions) caused to the ear.
3. Details of the behaviour at insertion and in the post insertion period. For example, ear rubbing, shaking, vocalisation etc.
4. An assessment of discomfort, pain and a description of the lesions at 7 days post insertion and at 21 days post insertion. For any animal showing any signs of lesions, a photograph should be taken of both sides of the ear, at the same angle to facilitate comparison at the 7 & 21 day assessment.
5. In addition, a full clinical report should be provided for any cases which required treatment or veterinary intervention post insertion. The report should include photographs. If no cases required veterinary intervention a statement should be included in the report to say so.
6. Any other relevant observations found during the assessment.
7. A sample of the tag type used for the assessment must be included with the veterinarian's report.