The Cattle Welfare Assessment

The 21 day welfare assessment is the second stage of the tag approval process. If the initial assessment of the tag(s) and applicator is successful, the BCMS Ear Tag Allocation System (ETAS) section will confirm that the welfare testing can go ahead. You are responsible for all costs relating to welfare testing.

If a range of tags with the same fixing mechanism is submitted for approval, we will assess if each type of tag needs a welfare assessment.

After the assessment you must send a copy of the welfare report to the BCMS ETAS section. We will assess it and inform you in writing if the ear tag(s) can undergo BSI Publicly Available Specifications (PAS) testing.

Requirements of the welfare assessment

- It must take place on at least 2 farms, with 1 batch of calves farmed intensively (kept in enclosed buildings or yards), and 1 batch farmed extensively (with access to pasture).
- Each batch must include at least 25 calves: if it falls below 25, we may request a further trial. The calves must stay on the holding on which the assessment is being carried out.
- Calves included in the assessment must be tagged within 20 days of birth.
- ETAS will allocate the ear tag number sequence and enter them in the system on your behalf when a new order is entered. 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 ears if the tag is approved.
- If the tag has already been approved for use in another Member State, we may be able to approve it for use in GB without further testing. You will need to submit details of the welfare testing that has been carried out in the other country. If this is insufficient, we may request a further welfare assessment in GB.
- If the assessment tag is not given full approval, it may need to be removed by a vet and replaced with an approved tag bearing the same information. The cattle owner and the tag manufacturer should agree who will pay for re-tagging in such cases before the assessment begins. It is the cattle keeper’s responsibility to make sure that cattle are permanently marked with fully approved tags. Defra is not liable for this cost.

The Vet’s Report

At the end of the assessment, the vet must submit a report containing the following.

- Details of the farm with a description of the environment and husbandry systems in which the calves were kept.
- An assessment of discomfort and pain at insertion and a description of the immediate damage (lesions) caused to the ear.
- Details of the behaviour at insertion and in the post insertion period - for example, ear rubbing, shaking, vocalisation etc.
- Assessments of discomfort, pain and a description of any lesions at both 7 and 21 days after insertion. Any lesions should be photographed on both sides of the ear, at the same angle, for comparison at both assessments.
- A full clinical report, with photographs, of any calf needing treatment or veterinary intervention after insertion. If none needed the report should state this.
- Any other relevant observations found during the assessments.

You should include a sample of the tag type used for the assessment with the vet’s report.

ETAS Support, BCMS/RPA Workington