

Identification

Article By: Manda Doffing of Tri-R Ranch in Glendale, Oregon

The fastest way is to **tag**. The easiest way is to tell one goat from another is to tag. The least expensive way is to tag. The least invasive to the goat is to tag. You can also **tattoo**.

Tags are available from the USDA Scrapie eradication program (866-873-2824 or 503-399-5871). The tags, and the pliers for application, are free. In the very near future all animals that move from one place to another will need a scrapie tag. The tattoos are accepted for now. The goat supply catalogs (Hoegger, Caprine, Nasco, Premier1) carry a wide variety of colors, shapes and sizes for purchase.

It is time to get used to tagging your animals, even those going to slaughter. Takes less than a minute to apply and can last for the life of the goat. Tags can be read without having to: catch the animal, wipe off the inside of the ear, hope you don't need a backlight, read a tattoo. All our goats are tagged except the Nubians that enter the dairy show ring (frowned on to have a tag in a dairy goat's ear). The more goats you have the less you know each one by sight. Visitors to your herd would appreciate a number instead being told, "the third one from the left, opps it moved". Lets face it, if you raise Boers they are white with a red head and if you raise Kiko they are white, if you have Boer crosses they are white with light red heads. Yes, you know the subtle differences of each of your animals but I don't.

Tattoos are required if you are registering the animal with a breed association. These tattoos are used for identification in the show ring. All animals that enter the show ring must have a tattoo that matches its registration paper. It is believed that tattoos are permanent. This is only true if the stars are in alignment with the moon and sun. Even if done right I have seen letters or numbers fade away and become illegible. I have seen more than one goat lose a championship due to tattoos. I have lost a championship on a tattooed goat because I didn't check the tattoos before leaving the farm. One of the letters had been scratched in the brush and was not legible. They are not permanent.

The goat supply catalogs (Hoegger, Caprine, Nasco, Premier1) carry several sizes of letters/numbers. The 3/8-inch size do the longest lasting job and are the easiest to read. When you get your characters, take a file and barely blunt the tip of each pin on each character. This makes a better hole for the ink to penetrate and the tattoos are easier to read. Yes it takes a bit of time to go but is well worth the effort. Do not wince at squeezing the applicator pliers. You need to make some good holes for the ink to penetrate. Apply the ink (I use past) and rub the ink well (I use a toothbrush and have a small board on the backside of the ear to push against). Now press on some baking soda after the ink has been rubbed in. This sets the ink and reduces the amount of "green disease" that is spread around from goat to goat after a tattoo session. Speaking of "green disease", use green ink. The white is not readable. Seems as if it would be easier to read on dark ears, but is very hard to find the characters and is not permanent. I had to re-tattoo every goat I tried white on.

I have raised dairy and meat goats for 12 years. Call with questions 541-832-3349 or email mandad@frontiernet.net.