

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Animal Identification

Q: What is animal identification?

A: The second component of NAIS is animal identification, which provides a uniform numbering system for identifying animals.

Q: What is an animal identification number (AIN)?

A: The AIN is a unique 15-digit number that stays with the animal for its lifetime. This number links the animal to its premises of origin (birthplace or location where the animal was first identified). The AIN is imprinted on identification devices with a space between every third digit to improve readability. For example: 840 234 567 890 123

- The first three digits of the AIN comprise the country code—840 is the United States.
- “840” AINs can only be acquired by locations that have a PIN.

Together, the 15 digits provide a unique identifier for the animal anywhere in the world.

Q: Do I need to identify my animals?

A: Animals that are moved from one location to another, where the risk of disease exposure increases (e.g., auctions, feedlots, fairs, sporting events, or veterinary clinics), should be identified. Some animals may be identified individually or as a group.

Identification devices are available for use with the following species: Cattle and Bison, Swine, Sheep and Goats, Cervids (deer and elk), Equines (horses, mules, donkeys, burros), and Camelids (llamas and alpacas).

Household pets (cats and dogs) and animals not listed above (with the exception of poultry) do not need to participate in the animal identification portion of NAIS.

Q: What is an “840” AIN device?

A: “840” AIN devices/tags meet NAIS standards and have been approved for use in system. They are available in radio frequency identification (RFID) tags and injectable transponders, as well as visual-only tags.

“840” AIN devices, with the exception of injectable transponders, must contain:

- the 15-digit animal identification number (AIN) bearing the “840” prefix,
- the U.S. Shield, and
- the words, “Unlawful to Remove”.

Q: Why should I choose 840 AIN devices over other available forms of ID?

A: Producers and animal owners should consider using 840 AIN devices whenever individual animal ID is needed. Animal health officials are able to use the AINs contained on NAIS-approved devices, in conjunction with PINs, to quickly determine where suspect animals are located and what other animals might have been exposed. The use of 840 AIN identification devices improves disease traceability and enhances national animal disease response capabilities.

Q: Where can I purchase 840 AIN devices?

A: Producers and owners should contact authorized AIN manufacturers for the AIN device managers in their area. A list of authorized AIN devices and AIN manufacturers is available at the following link: www.usda.gov/nais/840.

Q: *How much do 840 AIN devices cost?*

A: The costs associated with animal identification vary depending on animal species and method of identification selected by the producer/owner. For example: visual plastic eartags cost ~\$1 to \$2; button-like radio frequency eartags cost ~ \$2 to \$3; and injectable transponders cost up to ~\$20. Additional costs may be incurred if the producer/animal owner requires assistance in applying the devices.

Q: *How do I apply 840 AIN devices?*

A: Identification devices can be applied by the owners themselves or by tagging service providers; additionally, owners can use the services of an approved tagging site provider or veterinarian to apply the devices to their animals. Livestock owners should first check with State or Tribal animal health authorities to find out what animal identification options and requirements may already be in place in their State or Tribe.

Q: *Can I use 840 AIN devices for other purposes?*

A: 840 AIN devices can be used anytime official individual animal ID is needed. These devices equip you to use the same identification system for more than one purpose, including participation in State/Federal Cooperative animal health programs; in marketing programs such as age-, source-, and process-verification, quality assurance, or Country of Origin Labeling (COOL); on official paperwork such as Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (CVIs) or health certificates; and, in genetic programs and breed registries.

Q: *Are there any restrictions regarding the use of 840 AIN devices?*

A: 840 AIN devices are official and cannot be removed from the identified animal or passed on to another person, such as a neighbor. Producers and owners should keep track of the devices for recordkeeping purposes. 840 AIN devices can only be used on animals born in the United States.

Additional Information

For more information about NAIS, contact:

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