



Ear Tattooing

Explanation and Guidelines

The tattoo of an animal is an individual, unique number which identifies that single animal. The tattoo is made up of three components:

1. Stud identification (or tattoo brand). For example: CWS. This identification is made up of three letters and is allocated to each member on application to join as a stud member of the Association. All animals bred by the member must carry this stud identification.
2. Year Identifier. Each year has been allocated a letter. 2024 is V, 2025 is W, 2026 is X, 2027 is Y. This is the standard system which has been adopted in Australia using all letters of the alphabet except "I" and "O".
3. Individual animal number. This is a number that the member allocates to that animal. It may be the first calf born in the year is 01, the second is 02, the third is 03, and so on.

Therefore the complete tattoo for the second born calf to herd CWS in 2025 in this example would be CWS W02.

Application of the Tattoo

The total tattoo should be in one ear. It is preferable to use the animal's left, or near side ear, as NLIS tags are placed in the right, or offside ear. The tattoo can be either a continuous line, or split with the stud identifier above and the year identifier and individual animal number below.

The tattoo should be applied high in the inner part of the ear and avoid ridges and blood vessels. When using management tags avoid placing them through the tattoo. Ensure the equipment used is kept sharp, and disinfected between animals.

Use green tattoo paste as this will give the best results.

The following points provide additional guidance:

- a. Use disposable gloves. This will help keep the paperwork, you and your equipment clean.

- b. Clean the ears with methylated spirits or surgical spirits. The head should be adequately restrained
- c. Use thick paper or cardboard to check the tattoo BEFORE you tattoo the animal.
- d. Check, and double check the calf, the tattoo and the paperwork. You may need extra help from a friend or neighbour, just as a backup.
- e. Apply the paste to the ear first, using either your finger or a soft toothbrush, then tattoo, then rub in more paste into the holes. *Note:* Some people do not apply the paste first, simply tattoo, and then check the tattoo before applying paste in case of a mistake. If there is an error, this way there is always the option to let the punctures made by the tattoo letters and numbers heal, and re-tattoo correctly later.
- f. Clean the tattoo letters and numbers when finished (soak in methylated spirits and use an old toothbrush).
- g. If possible have either a rotating head on your tattoo pliers or have a second set of pliers. This way you can have your Stud identification as a permanent setting on one side or in one set of pliers. This makes the job far easier.

Your cattle should be handled quietly before, during and after the procedure, and the impact of tattooing on the well being of the cattle will be minimal, if carried out as recommended.

Pictured below is an example of a well applied, healed tattoo. Please note the stud identification is not included but this is how a tattoo should look when it has been applied correctly. A24 denotes the 24th animal born in a year that was represented by the letter A.

