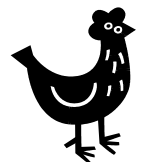


# Livestock Matters

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**A series of newsletters/bulletins to the farming community**

**In this edition.....**



**Animal Identification**

In the previous Bulletin I alluded to animal identification and some of the new regulations for pigs, sheep & goats. The regulations regarding the identification of cattle remain unchanged.

## Identification of Cattle

Cattle on Guernsey have had to be identified for many years to enable milk production records to be attributed to individuals and to enable pedigrees to be constructed. This has enabled improvements in the Guernsey breed in terms of their productivity, milk quality and confirmation. Initially identification was achieved using sketches for the Royal Guernsey Horticultural and Agricultural Society (known as the RGA) which was established in 1842. The RGA introduced metal ear-tags in the 1980's and ear tattoos in the 1990's as means of identification. Part III of the Animal Health Ordinance 1996 made provision for animal identification to assist with the introduction of 'Routine Bovine Health Testing'. The competent authority at the time was the States Agricultural and Milk Marketing Board (AMMB) which established a database to manage the identification of cattle.

To facilitate exports to the United Kingdom (UK) or the European Union (EU) a standardised identification system was adopted. For cattle at that time this consisted of a yellow plastic ear-tag in one ear and an electronic identification device (EID) 'button' ear-tag in the other. EID ear-tags contained 'microchips' that could be 'read' with a microchip scanner enabling animal handlers to quickly and accurately identify animals from a distance. The microchips within EID's are similar to those implanted into the body tissues of pets for their identification. At the time it was not permitted for microchips to be inserted into food producing livestock for fear that they may migrate deeply into body tissues that may be consumed by humans. EID ear-tags are expensive and at the time the microchip scanners were primitive and had limited capabilities. Consequently both farmers and animal handlers found EID tags held no appreciable benefits over conventional ear-tags. Ultimately IED ear-tags were superseded and cattle were identified with two conventional plastic, yellow ear-tags, one in each ear. The regulations regarding the identification of livestock in the UK and EU are under review and the use of EID's in certain categories of livestock may become compulsory in EU member states.

The cattle database was passed from the AMMB to the Agriculture and Countryside Board and is currently managed by the Farm Services Section of the States Commerce and Employment Department. All dairy farmers must inform Farm Services within 7 days of the birth of a calf. Currently Farm Services must identify that calf with yellow ear-tags within 21 days of birth. All cattle must be individually identified with ear-tags and recorded on the Farm Services database but some producers choose not to register their cattle with the RGA

If an ear-tagged cow or calf is moved (sold or gifted) to another producer, within or outside of the Bailiwick, Farm Services must be informed. The animals' original ear-tags remain with it all of its life and are not changed upon change of ownership or export. If an animal is slaughtered for human consumption or becomes 'fallen stock' Farm Services would be grateful if you informed them. This information can be cross-checked and corroborated by the licenced slaughter-man / knacker-man. In Guernsey this is Alan Cox. If small livestock become 'fallen stock' and are cremated by the GSPCA Farm Services would be grateful if you informed them.

*'Fallen Stock' means animals on farm which were:*

- *ethanased with or without definite diagnosis.*
- *killed by a traumatic event e.g. fires and road accidents.*
- *culled as part of normal routine production arrangements.*
- *found dead (including stillborn and unborn animals) .*
- *born before 1<sup>st</sup> August 1996 and cannot enter the food chain.*

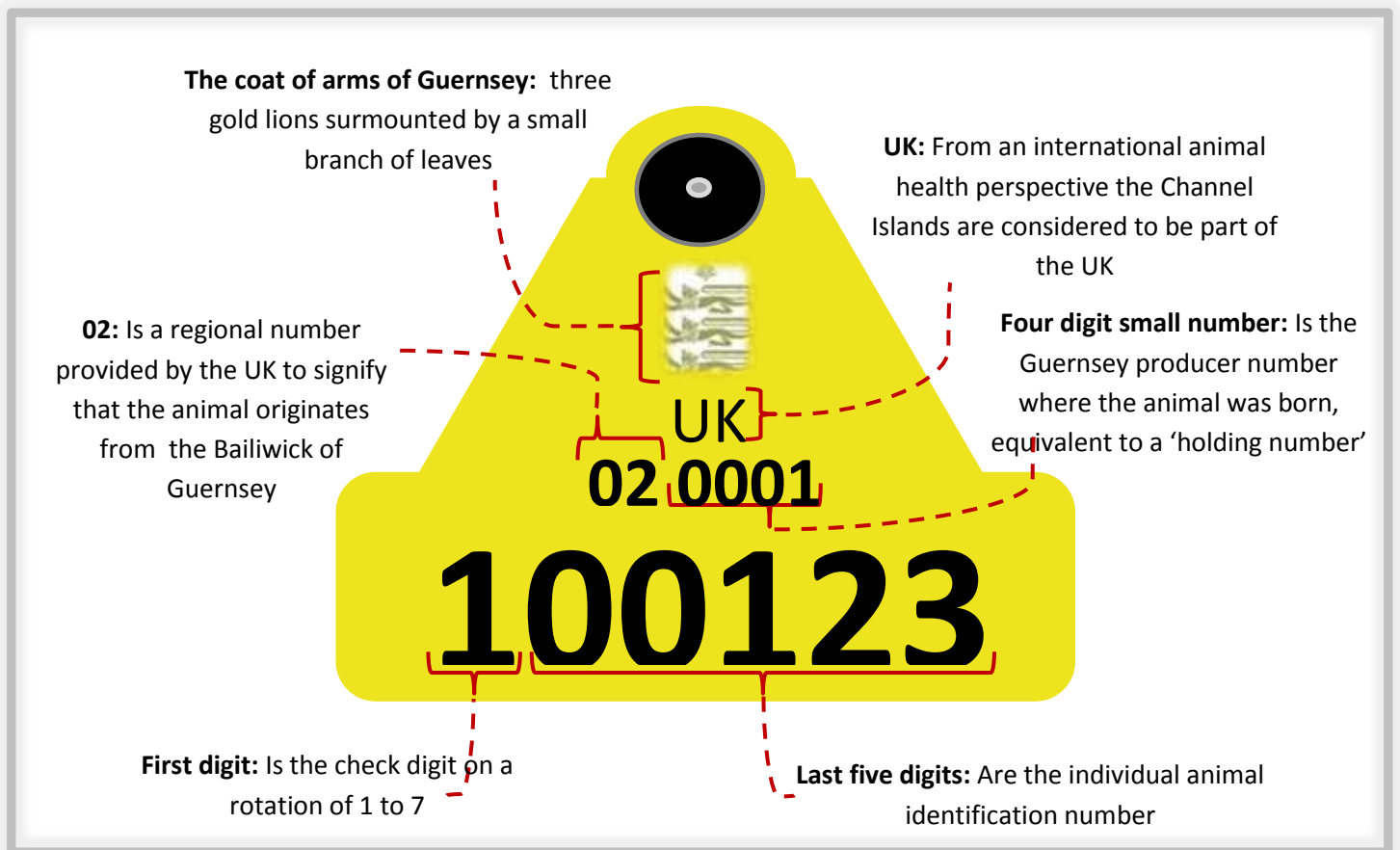
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All fallen stock must be collected by the licenced knacker-man for incineration. It is illegal to bury livestock and horses according to The Animal Carcasses (Control of Burial) Ordinance, 1998.

In addition all cattle fallen stock over 48 months old (O48M) and any cattle presented for slaughter which are identified as sick at ante-mortem inspection and are O48M are described as 'risk cattle' and must have a sample of their brain stem taken for BSE testing as part of on-going BSE surveillance.

Identification of cattle now plays an important role in the traceability of food. This enables any problems, including disease, residues or welfare, to be traced back to the producer.

Below is a representation and explanation of the text and image on a Guernsey cattle ear-tag.



*An example of one of two ear tags worn in each ear of a calf.*



An example ear tag pliers (an applicator)(approx. £15)

Previous editions are available online

<http://www.gov.gg/article/5140/Guernsey-Slaughterhouse>

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