



FIELD GUIDE TO COW TAGS

AND OTHER TYPES OF CATTLE IDENTIFICATION

BRANDING



- One of oldest and most common cattle identification methods
- Leaves a permanent, indelible mark on the skin
- Causes the animal some pain, but heals quickly
- Visible damage to skin may reduce the value of hide for leather-making

EAR TAGS



- Come in plastic or metal
- Can be custom-numbered on one or both sides
- Permits identifying the animal from a distance
- Requires special equipment and a certain amount of skill to properly affix the tag
- May occasionally detach and be lost

NECK TAGS



- Easily affixed to a chain, rope, or strap looped around the animal's neck
- Viewable from a distance
- In growing animals, chain must be periodically loosened to prevent choking
- Chain may also get caught on posts, branches, and other protrusions

ANKLE STRAPS



- Usually fastened to animal's hind legs
- Easily attached and removed as needed
- Good for basic herd management, e.g., identifying cows for the milking parlor or those being treated with antibiotics
- Due to their position on the leg, straps can get caked in muck, reducing readability

EAR TATTOOS



- Like branding, ear tattoos are permanent; but they do not compromise the value of the hide
- Cattle breed associations often require that animals be tattooed in order to be registered
- Animal must be securely restrained before applying tattoo
- If done poorly, the tattoo will be blurry and hard to read

RADIO FREQUENCY IDENTIFICATION



- Uses electromagnetic fields to identify and track RFID ear or neck tags attached to the animal
- Detailed info about the animal can be stored electronically
- Electronic tagging for livestock represents one of the oldest uses of RFID technology
- May soon become federally required for certain categories of cattle

OTHER LESS COMMON CATTLE ID METHODS



- Taking a noseprint (similar to taking a fingerprint)
- Freeze-branding (permanent)
- Horn-branding (must be redone every few years)
- Branding with paint (temporary; crayons, chalk, and spray markers can also be used)
- Ear-notching or ear-punching (permanent, but not a legally acceptable form of animal ID)

Learn more at: ketchummfg.com/livestock-identification-tags-metal-plastic/