Official identification for cattle in Michigan will change on March 1, 2007. At that time, all cattle of all ages must be identified with official radio frequency identification (RFID) ear tags prior to movement from premises. RFID will allow for faster intra- and interstate animal tracking for disease control and eradication programs. The premises and animal identification requirements are consistent with the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) under development.

Beginning March 1, 2007, metal ear tags will no longer be acceptable as official identification for cattle in Michigan.

Premises Registration

To place a RFID tag order, producers need a Premises Identification Number. The Premises ID Number is assigned by USDA to each premises (location) that houses livestock. Its numbering format is seven alphanumeric characters, e.g., A123R69.

Michigan TB tested herds have been assigned a Premises ID Number. Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) sent a letter to these producers in late February that listed the herd’s Premises ID Number and details about the mandatory RFID program.

If you misplaced the letter from MDA or need to obtain a Premises ID Number, you may contact the Michigan Department of Agriculture at 866-870-5136. The following information is required to obtain a Premises ID Number: name of owner; address where cattle are housed (actual road or street address, not a PO box number); city, state, and zip code; and type of livestock on premises (dairy, beef, feedlot).

How many premises shall you register? One or more, depending on whether or not you commingle animals. If you have two herds that are kept separate and never commingled, or located in non-contiguous counties that are miles apart, you may want two Premises ID Numbers.

RFID Ear Tags

RFID ear tags are a form of electronic identification. The tag has a microchip with a unique series of numbers. The numbers can be read by a microchip reader. The 15-digit number also will be printed on the front and back of each RFID tag to be read visually. The first 3 characters in the number will be 840, which is the U.S. country designation. The 15-digit animal identification number is a lifetime number assigned to an individual animal. The tag is never changed unless lost. If this occurs, the animal will be retagged at its current premises.
RFID ear tags can be ordered by calling Michigan Department of Agriculture at (866) 870-5136. The cost of the tags is $2 each and the applicator is $20. Be sure to request an applicator when ordering tags for the first time, as the applicator is specific to RFID ear tags.

The official application site for the tags is the left ear of the animal. The left ear is on your left when viewing the animal from behind. Detailed application instructions are provided with the RFID tags.

Additional information can be accessed at <http://www.michigan.gov/mda> or by calling 517-373-1077.

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**RFID Tools**

Pictured are, clockwise from top, a radio frequency identification tag reader, front and back halves of a RFID ear tag and a personal digital assistant, which can be linked to the reader and a personal computer. Beginning March 1, 2007, all Michigan cattle leaving premises must be fitted with the tags, but opting to employ a reader, PDA, and computer may provide additional herd management options.

*Photo by Jacob McCarthy*