



Tagging Calves and Calving Year Identification

A registered breeder should plan his animal identification system carefully when beginning a Wagyu herd. A well-planned system will simplify record keeping and individual animal identification.

The tag number and tattoo on calves born in a particular year could be numbered in sequence and combined with that year of birth. For example, 801, 802, 803 or 781 782,783 could be the numbers assigned your first three (3) calves born in 2008. Any combination that will assist in you easily identifying your animals is acceptable so long as your method is consistent year on year.

Ear tags of various colors also can be used to designate calves by different sires. Therefore, by using a color ear tag plus the year and the cow number you have a complete age and parentage record on the ear tag of each calf. Sire and Dam ID and calf birth date are common supplemental information included on many calf ear tags.

You may also choose to tag all calves in the left ear for easy access when working cattle from the left side through cattle handling facilities or, choose the ear to tag based on the gender of the calf to allow easy calf gender identification at a distance. For instance, all bull calves could be tagged in the right ear, while all heifer calves could be tagged in the left ear.

The Beef Improvement Federation (BIF) endorses **International Year/Letter Designations for animal ID** to denote the calving year with a letter as follows: X = 2010, Y = 2011, Z = 2012, A = 2013, B = 2014, etc (see table below) **The letters I, O, Q, and V are never used.**

To use this system, assign calves the year letter followed by a number indicating birth order. A four-digit ID is **recommended** when the operation consists of more than 100 breeding-age females. For example, the tenth calf of 2010 could be identified as X010.

Year	Code	Year	Code	Year	Code	Year	Code
2006	S	2011	Y	2016	D	2021	J
2007	T	2012	Z	2017	E	2022	K
2008	U	2013	A	2018	F	2023	L
2009	W	2014	B	2019	G	2024	M
2010	X	2015	C	2020	H	2025	N

Tattooing is a form of permanent identification. The tattoo and the code on the ear tag can be identical and the tattoo can be used as part of the animal’s registered prefix and suffix (name). Each member is required to choose a herd prefix. This must be tattooed into a chosen ear (left or right). This requirement is in addition to the individual tattoo number of the animal.

Take care to place letters and numbers in the tattoo applicator/pliers in the proper order and orientation. If in doubt as to whether or not a specific tattoo applicator is properly prepared, depress the tattoo pliers on a sheet of paper or cardboard. When tattooing the ear, liberally smear the ink onto the inside upper lobe of the calf’s ear, insert the pliers and depress firmly. Take care not to tattoo through one of the cartilage ribs in the ear. Re-apply tattoo ink to ensure a legible tattoo.

Remember tattoos with bars, diagonals, punctuation marks or other symbols, are not acceptable.

These days if you have a larger herd with multiple records spanning over many years you are most likely using herd management software to maintain the information so if you have a standardized ID system that uses a consistent format, quickly searching for individual animals can be a relatively straight forward and painless task.

If you have any questions or queries, don’t hesitate to contact the AWA office and we would be happy to assist.

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