

## Declaring Stock Free of Hormonal Growth Promotants

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### BACKGROUND

Hormonal Growth Promotants (HGP) are implants registered for use in cattle to increase the rate of weight gain on good feed. These implants contain either naturally occurring hormones such as oestradiol, progesterone and testosterone, or contain a chemical, which stimulates natural hormone release (e.g. zeranol).

**Declaring cattle free of HGPs** is important for a number of beef markets that restrict or prohibit their use. There are currently three ways for cattle producers to do this:

1) The **National Vendor Declaration** contains a section for HGP free declarations for stock consignments. This is all that is necessary for most market destinations, such as domestic supermarkets, the Korean and some Japanese markets.



2) The **Pink tag** system is available for producers to declare stock HGP free for some non-European Union (EU) markets. It remains uncertain whether this will continue.

3) **The HGP Control System** is used for EU which requires much stricter assurances that beef exports to the EU are HGP free. Regulations have become increasingly tight since 1989, when the European Commission first banned importation of meat and offal from stock treated with HGPs. The pink transaction tag-based HGP Control System (HGPCS) of later years has now been superseded by a new system from 1 December 1999, in order to satisfy EU requirements. The Cattle Council of Australia wishes to retain this market (worth \$100m) and has endorsed the changes to the HGPCS.

The new HGPCS requires that properties producing cattle for beef exports to the EU should become EU accredited under the Federal *Export Control Act*. There is an individual identification requirement under the system, which will be met by the National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS).

The HGPCS also imposes control on the use of HGP on properties. These controls are described in Agnote J76 "Use of Hormonal Growth Promotants in the NT".

### **NATIONAL LIVESTOCK IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM (NLIS)**

The NLIS uses permanent Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFID). Pictured is the Allflex RFID in the form of a button ear tag containing a transponder that can be read electronically. It currently costs about \$3.10/tag. These tags are now widely used in Victoria following a 12-month government subsidised pilot program. *A/eis* market an intra-ruminal device.



White permanent tags (breeder tags) are to be used on stock bred on the property. Orange tags (post-breeder tags) are to be used on stock not bred on the property. Such tags may not be removed, defaced or interfered with. Only one such tag may be applied to each animal.

The NLIS permanent tags are not exclusively used for the EU market. Some properties are considering the use of the RFID tags for their own purposes, such as monitoring growth rate performance in the paddock, and abattoir feedback on carcass traits.

### **EU ACCREDITED PROPERTIES**

Properties wishing to access the EU market need to consider the implications carefully. The following actions will need to be taken by the producer and will be audited by inspectors:

- No cattle implanted with HGPs can remain on the property; use of HGPs must be discontinued and HGP stocks must be returned to the manufacturer.
- The owner must apply for EU accreditation through the DBIRD as agents for AQIS.
- The system is closed, i.e. an EU accredited property can only agist or purchase cattle from a similarly accredited property; similarly, if an accredited property agists cattle on a non-accredited property, then those cattle may not return.
- Adopt the NLIS by individually identifying all cattle on the property with approved permanent devices; all cattle on the property must be so identified within 12 months of accreditation, and thereafter by weaning.
- A lime green tailtag with the Property Identification Code (PIC) (tailtag number) will be used whenever cattle are trucked to slaughter destined for the EU market. These cattle will already carry a permanent identification device. Both permanent identification devices and

green transaction tags will be ordered using a DBIRD form, which must be endorsed by the EU accreditor (NT).

- An EU National Vendor Declaration (EU NVD) will be completed whenever cattle leave the property for the EU market or another EU accredited property.
- A register of numbers of permanent devices purchased and used on the property must be kept; any cattle purchased (from another EU accredited property) will need to have an EU NVD, which must be retained.
- Meat and Livestock Australia has established a database which allows such devices to be scanned and loaded onto it. Permanent identification devices issued by a manufacturer will be recorded on the database against the property details automatically; the producer is responsible for updating the database on new introductions onto the property, and for any sales outside the EU system.

### **OTHER TAGS**

The standard NT transaction tag is now white with black lettering, containing the PIC (equivalent to the old tailtag number). This may be a tailtag or eartag and is compulsory for stock sent to abattoirs or saleyards. In the NT; transaction tagging is not necessary for NT stock sent to NT abattoirs in numbers greater than 20 from the same property. The PIC must be recorded on the waybill.

Pink tags formerly used to denote HGP freedom may still be used for that purpose, but will no longer be accepted by an abattoir for stock eligible for the EU.

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Published: Monday 17 April 2000.

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