

## Animal Identification

### Q. What is animal identification?

**A.** Animal identification is the second component of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). It provides producers with a uniform numbering system for identifying their animals. Animal identification can be accomplished through either individual animal identification or group/lot identification.

### Q. What is individual animal identification and when can it be used?

**A.** Individual animal identification for NAIS is achieved through the assignment of a unique animal identification number (AIN) that stays with an animal throughout its lifetime. The AIN is a 15-digit number beginning with 840, the numeric code for the United States. To meet the varying needs of animal owners, AIN 840 devices are available as visual tags, radio frequency identification (RFID) tags, and injectable transponders. The AIN is linked to the premises identification number (PIN) where the animal was kept when identification was first applied.

Owners can obtain an AIN for any animal, if they so choose. AIN 840 devices may be used when official identification is required by regulations and whenever individual animal identification is applicable to the species. Official identification is not necessary for animals that only leave their birth location for transport to a custom slaughter facility.

AINs can be used beyond animal health programs and on certificates of veterinary inspection. For example, AINs also meet the requirements for use in marketing programs administered by the Agricultural Marketing Service—including age/source verification, quality assurance, and country of origin labeling (COOL). AINs can also be used for herd management and in some breed registries.

### Q. What is group/lot identification and when can it be used?

**A.** For groups of animals that travel through the production chain together, group/lot identification numbers (GIN) are available. The GIN is a 15-character number consisting of the PIN; the date that the group or lot of animals was assembled; and a two-digit number to reflect the count of groups assembled at the same premises on the same day (starting with 01). GINs are created and self-assigned by the person responsible for the animals on each farm.

GINs should only be used when a group of animals remains together throughout the production cycle. They are most commonly used by pork, poultry, sheep, and goat producers. However, GINs can be used for animals of any species if the group remains together through production.

When animals stay together as a group, individual identification of each animal in the group is not necessary

because it would not enhance disease response efforts. Animals that are removed from the group for show or sale should be identified with an AIN.

### Q. Am I required to participate in animal identification if I choose to sign up for a premises identification number (PIN)?

**A.** No. Obtaining a PIN for your operation does not obligate you to participate in other NAIS components. However, if you choose to participate in animal identification, you first need to obtain a PIN for your location.

### Q. How can I purchase official animal identification number (AIN) devices?

**A.** To use AIN devices, you must first obtain a PIN for the location where the animals are kept. You can get a PIN by contacting your State or Tribal NAIS administrator and completing the appropriate form. For your State or Tribal NAIS administrator's contact information, please visit: <http://www.usda.gov/nais/getPIN>.

Only approved manufacturers are authorized to produce AIN devices. To meet the varying needs of animal owners, AIN devices are available as visual tags, radio frequency identification (RFID) tags, and injectable transponders. For information concerning AIN devices, please visit: <http://www.usda.gov/nais/840>.

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**Additional Information**

For more information about NAIS,  
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[www.usda.gov/nais](http://www.usda.gov/nais)

**Your Animals. Your Livelihood. Your Future. Your NAIS.**