

## SHEEP TAGGING DEROGATION

Producers are being urged to ensure they are following the sheep identification rules. A week of farm and market inspection is expected this month by EU officials before they decide whether to extend the UK's current derogation on double tagging, which runs out in June. Farmers must ensure their flock registers are up-to-date and be familiar with the tagging rules including the 'R' and 'S' tags- a brief reminder:

- All sheep must have a Defra approved eartag in one ear before the animal leaves the birth holding (Holding of birth tag). For animals regularly housed this should be fitted within 6 months of birth otherwise the tag should be fitted within 9 months.
- Replacement 'R' tags are red. Lost or illegible tags must be replaced within 28 days of being noticed. If the animal is still on its birth holding the keeper can replace it with an identical tag or another "Holding of Birth" tag with a different number. If the animal is not on its birth holding, the keeper should replace it with an identical tag or with a red 'R' tag.
- Before an animal leaves any holding it should have a tag with the flock or herd mark of that holding. 'S' tags are used when an animal moves off a holding which is not its birth holding. The tag bears the letter 'S' followed by the flock/herd mark of the holding it is about to leave, it does not have an individual number. Once an animal has 3 official tags no more can be applied for welfare reasons, any further movements must be recorded in the flock register and on movement documents using the full individual identification number of the animal. This can also be used if the keeper does not want to apply an 'S' tag for an earlier movement.
- Further rules can be found at [www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/id-move/sheep-goats/id.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/animalh/id-move/sheep-goats/id.htm)

## FUTURE OF THE RAM GENOTYPING SCHEME

A review of the GB National Scrapie Plan (NSP) Ram Genotyping Scheme (RGS) has recommended that a fully-funded RGS is no longer appropriate. A consultation as to whether a cost shared genotyping scheme should continue in the future or whether the scheme should close will be consulted on in the summer. The RGS will remain open to members until the outcome of the consultation, but no ewes will be tested after April 1 2007.

The review follows a decision by the EU Council and Parliament to reject proposals for compulsory scrapie resistance testing in pure breed and pedigree flocks. The review included an examination by the Spongiform Encephalopathy Advisory Committee (SEAC). It concluded that the latest research and surveillance testing concluded that BSE in the UK sheep flock is 'very low if present at all' and that the current RGS would have very little impact on public health protection.

## 2006 SPS PAYMENTS

As of February 14 the RPA has paid 40,718 claimants in full (out of 109,000). Full payments are now suspended whilst the RPA

makes partial SPS payments. This means that all English claimants should receive at least half of their money in the next 3 weeks (or at least those with claims over €1,000).

Producers should check their payments especially those paid in full following several reports of errors. The RPA has added a new page to its website to help with checking, it includes various calculators, dairy reference amounts, sugar entitlements and advice on transferring entitlements. Go to [www.rpa.gov.uk](http://www.rpa.gov.uk) and then click on 'Entitlements' on the Hotlinks on the right hand side.

Action	Points
• Check payments are correct. See last month's Practical Pointers for help.	
• Log onto the RPA website or if in doubt get professional advice.	



## OXFORD FARMING CONFERENCE

The Oxford Farming conference was upbeat and stimulating, containing papers on climate change, renewable energy and food production and retailing. Commissioner Mariann Fischer Boel also gave a clear indication that she would expect the Single Payment to still be in operation by 2020 (despite the UK's clear wish to end support). She also made it clear that she did not expect any radical reform until after 2012. This means that we can budget with some confidence that the Fischler Reforms are likely to be allowed to run their full course to 2012. There are issues such as modulation to sort out, but basic payments are unlikely to be tampered with.

## LEVY BOARD SURVEY RESULTS

Results from the survey carried out by consultants Accenture (see November's Practical Pointers) to help shape the future of the new levy Board have been released.

- The report found that there were several common issues within both agricultural and the horticultural sectors which should encourage further collaboration in the future.
- Good communication with the levy payers was a key concern
- Bureaucracy and regulatory compliance was cited as a problem for many
- Levy payers would like to see more money channelled into providing information about the health and nutritional benefits of produce, and
- They would like to see the new Board having impact on their profitability and reducing costs.

## OTHER NEWS

- Base interest rates rose by a quarter of one point to 5.25% on January 11 surprising many. No change was made at the last rate meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> February. For analysis of why and what this means to farmers [click here](#).