



September 14, 2020

Dear Dairy and Beef Producers and Food Animal Veterinarians,

This letter is to notify you of the availability of no-cost Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) ear tags for use in young replacement breeding cattle.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has awarded contracts for tag production through three companies, Allfex, Datamars and Y-Text, in order to obtain up to 8 million low-frequency RFID tags. Of these 8 million RFID tags, roughly 2.1% have been allocated for Pennsylvania stakeholders, including producers and veterinarians. This is the USDA's latest effort in phasing out the metal National Uniform Ear-tagging System (NUES) tags. USDA estimates the annual herd replacement rate for dairy to be 30% and 15% for beef herds. Therefore, if you are a 1,000 cow dairy you are eligible to receive up to 300 free RFID tags this year. Regardless of your herd size, RFID tags are dispensed in minimum units of 100 tags each, so the minimum number of tags any individual producer or veterinarian will receive is 100 tags.

NUES tags have previously been a valuable resource for Pennsylvania in disease control and eradication efforts, however, through the use of electronic identification devices (EID) Pennsylvania will be able to further enhance disease control. RFID tags provide both State and Federal veterinarians the best opportunity to both quickly and accurately eradicate high impact diseases.

The USDA allotted RFID tags will be available through the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA). These tags are for use in replacement breeding cattle and are available at no cost to the producer and food animal veterinarians. Additionally, low frequency RFID official calfhood vaccination tags (OCV) button tags will be made available for veterinary use in brucellosis vaccinated animals. Free metal NUES tags will remain available from the USDA at this time. Producers may also purchase RFID tags for their animals by contacting any of the approved companies who manufacture official identification RFID tags.

If you are interested in obtaining these free RFID tags, please visit the website below to place your request:

<http://www.pda.pa.gov/PremisesRegistration/Rfid>

Note; a federal premises identification number is required for you to receive official tags. If you do not know your premises ID, or have yet to obtain one, please visit the following link:

<http://www.pda.pa.gov/PremisesRegistration/>

Additional questions regarding ordering RFID tags and/or premises identification numbers, please contact Allie Steck at (717) 836-3235 or RA-PREMISE-ID@pa.gov

Sincerely,

Kevin D. Brightbill, DVM

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Director & State Veterinarian