

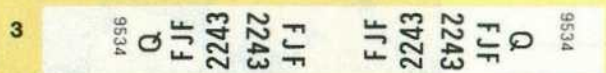
QUEENSLAND TAIL TAGS



Red print Denotes a CLEAR pesticide residue status
RANDOM SAMPLING ONLY



Black print denotes cattle from a holding which requires either
RANDOM or LOT sampling depending on herd history



Tags 1,2 and 3 are property tags used by owner when cattle moved to sale or slaughter

Either horizontal or vertical format is permitted



TB quarantine tag - used on cattle from herds under TB quarantine
RED on **GREEN** denotes a CLEAR pesticide residue status



District tag - used when a herd has less than 11 head and is not registered



Saleyard tag - used on cattle at a saleyard which are not otherwise identified



TB testing tag to NSW - used at saleyards close to the border



Blood testing tag

NOTE application of tags 7 and 8 do not preclude the requirement to use property tags



Aus-meat feedlot tag

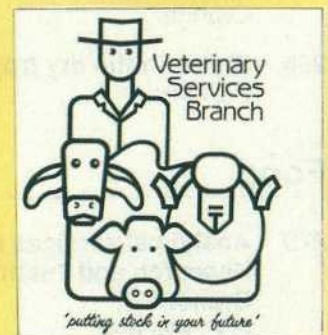


Figure 1. A poster explaining Queensland tail tags.

Protecting the beef industry: a tale of tell-tail tag

D. Danlel, Veterinary Services and B. Anderson, Veterinary Public Health

A simple strip of self-adhesive plastic attached to the base of the tail of each head of cattle bound for market and slaughter has proved the best thing since barbed wire for the Australian beef industry.

The 'tail tag' has become to the cattle industry what the 'finger-print' is to forensic science. Each head of cattle, by carrying an identification number unique to its property of origin, can be traced through all stages of the transport, marketing and processing chain.

Several manufacturers are currently approved to print tail tags in Queensland. Although their format may vary, the message always remains the same.

The first number on the tag, after the Q for Queensland identification, is the computer check digit which ensures that properties cannot be confused. The second and third numbers represent the shire code and the following four numbers identify the individual property within that shire.

The idea arose in 1976 during the early days of the national brucellosis and tuberculosis campaign (BTEC), when a system was needed to rid Australia of these two costly diseases by tracing them to their property of origin. Valuable export meat and dairy markets were at

stake, as well as human health, since both diseases can be contracted by humans.

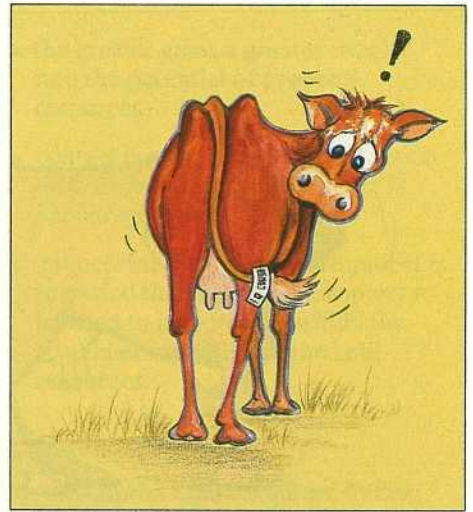
The task was impressive: to test and monitor over 10 m animals on 35,000 properties where 80% of cattle are found on extensive runs on vast stretches of open range.

The system had to be quick, easy, inexpensive and flexible enough suit a fast-moving chain of operations in the meatworks. Information coming to light at slaughter would mean enormous savings in mustering and yarding costs on the property.

And so the tail tag was born, the preferred option over the stressful ear tag and awkward back tag.

Now, 15 years later and some 15 million tests down the track, Queensland is brucellosis free and on target for tuberculosis freedom by 1 January 1990. This feat is attributable in no small part to the humble tail tag.

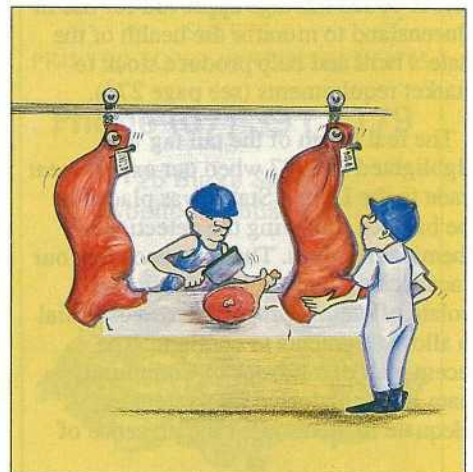
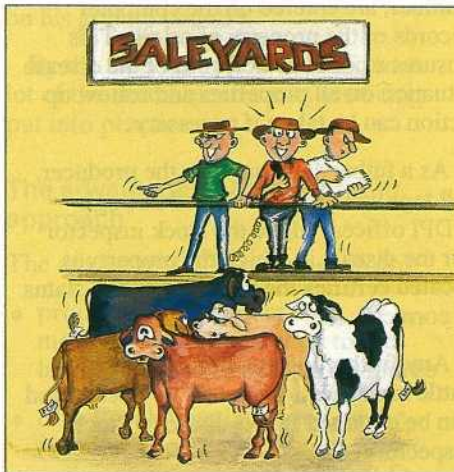
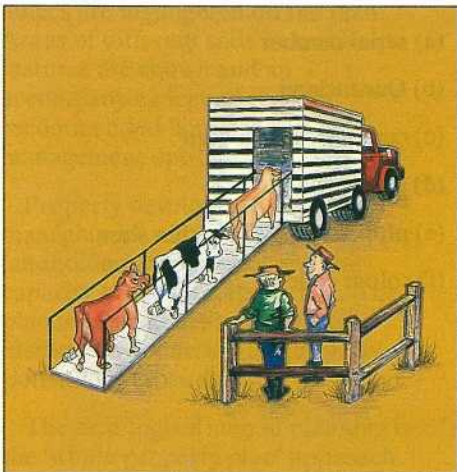
During those years, the tag has been developed and adapted to a variety of tasks. For example, it can be used in routine disease surveys for many conditions. If an exotic disease outbreak was detected, identification of property of origin would be an immediate priority and the tail tag would be indispensable.

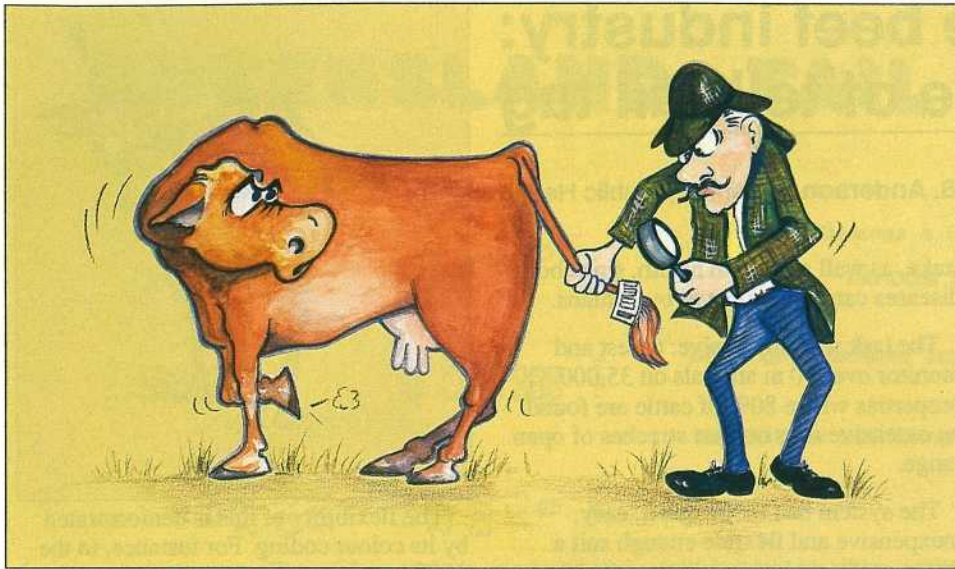


The flexibility of this is demonstrated by its colour coding. For instance, in the BTEC programme, clean stock can be separated from suspect stock by the colour of the tag: white for TB clean properties and green for TB quarantined properties.

This feature has proved its value in the enormous distances that stock are transported in Queensland, often over poor roads and in bad weather. Rollovers do occur, spilling green tagged cattle onto clean properties. But the distinctive tag colour permits easy identification and a quick roundup.

Another feature of the tail tag, and one exclusive to Queensland, is the inclusion of a serial number which allows the owner to record specific areas and individual animals on his meatworks drafts. Any condition recorded at slaughter can then be quickly correlated to a paddock or area.





The tail tag can also be selective to a particular type or class of stock, for instance to denote feedlot cattle.

The process combines the expertise of the staff of the QDPI's Veterinary Services Branch, Veterinary Public Health Branch and the diagnostic laboratory staff (BTB, Pathology, Pesticide, Biochemistry).

The latest advance in the tail tag story is the introduction of a colour coded tag to show the pesticide residue status of a property. The distinctive red print on white tape means a clear pesticide status as well as a clean brucellosis and tuberculosis status.

The advantage in achieving this tag status speaks for itself in a market that demands a pure, healthy product.

There are currently six distinctive colour coded tail tags approved for use in Queensland to monitor the health of the state's herd and help produce stock to market requirements (see page 274).

The real worth of the tail tag was highlighted in 1987 when our export meat trade to the United States was placed in the balance following the detection of chemical residues. The assurance that our traceback system could identify and isolate offending properties was essential to allow shipments to continue. The recent visit of a European Community team further endorsed the system as adequate to monitor for the presence of

hormonal growth promotants (HGP's), which are now banned in EC countries.

The tail tag works because it accompanies the animal from property through the various stages of marketing until it becomes a product marked 'fit for human consumption'.

It travels with the carcass during the inspection process and is correlated to the various parts such as the head, intestines and hide. In the event of a disease condition being discovered, all parts of the animal can be traced.

Carcasses which are fat sampled for pesticide residue testing or blood sampled for brucellosis are individually identified by recording or attaching the tail tag number to the sample container.

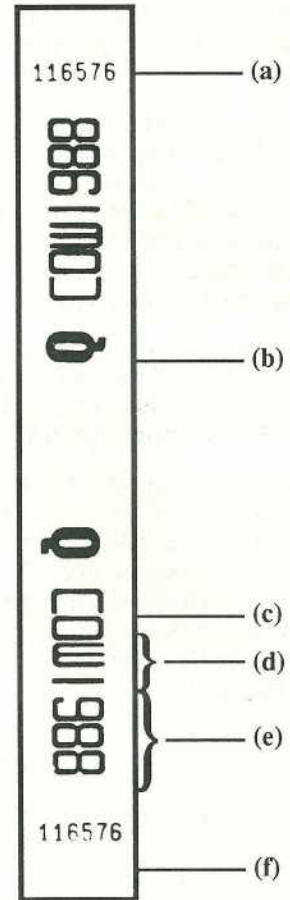
After laboratory analysis, information on the sample, together with the tag number, are entered on the computer records of the property of origin. This ensures a continuous record of the disease situation on all properties and follow up action can be taken if necessary.

As a further safeguard for the producer, tail tags can only be ordered through QDPI offices, where the stock inspector for the district in which the property is located certifies the tag number and status is correct.

Any further information about the cattle identification system in Queensland can be obtained from your local stock inspector.

To the beef industry—the producer, the agent, the processor, the exporter and the retailer—the tail tag is a simple, effective protection symbol. For the consumer, it is an assurance of a true quality product.

A 10 minute video on the tail tag story is available from Veterinary Services Branch and Veterinary Public Health Branch.



- (a) serial number
- (b) Queensland
- (c) computer check digit
- (d) shire code
- (e) property number within shire
- (f) colour code