SOP No: ATT 076

SUBJECT: Applying an ear tag to cattle

DATE ISSUED: 18.06.2014

POLICY: Minimum number of two operators required. Demonstrator: experience in this procedure. Students: competence in handling cattle. Students should practice applying ear tags in ears obtained from an abattoir before using this technique on live animals. Legal requirements: cattle must carry an NLIS identification (ear tag or intra-ruminal device) when moved between properties or sold (Stock Identification Regulation).

PRECAUTIONS: Wear sturdy footwear and sun protection. Cattle should be handled quietly before, during and after the procedure. Understand the flight zone of the animal. Cattle should not be overcrowded in yards. Wash hands and exposed body parts thoroughly with soap and water after handling animals. Cattle which respond aggressively to yarding or restraint in a crush should not be used for teaching.

EQUIPMENT: yards, crush, ear tagging pliers, ear tags and buttons.

PROCEDURE: Restrain adult animals in a crush; very young calves may be able to be restrained manually. Ensure that the ear tags are the appropriate design and colour for the chosen animals. Load the tag and button on to the pliers (the tag is held in the slot by the spring clamp and the button is placed so that its stem goes over the spike of the pliers. Lubricating the spike with Vaseline will allow the button to slip off the spike easily.

Know which ear to place the tag into. Place the pliers on the ear from the bottom so that the tag faces forward and the button is behind the ear; find a place in the middle of the ear where there are no major blood vessels or cartilage ridges and quickly and firmly close them. Be prepared to let the pliers move if the animal moves in response to the tag application as this may cause the ear to tear. Replacement tags should be located in the previous site where possible. Keep the pliers in a disinfectant solution between use on different animals. The plier’s spike must be replaced if it becomes blunt. On completion of the procedure observe the animal for signs of excessive distress and treat as required.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

REVISED:

REFERENCES