



# Scrapie

## Identification Requirements for Sheep & Goats

### What is Scrapie?

Scrapie is a fatal disease that affects the central nervous system of sheep and goats. There is no cure or treatment for scrapie.

It is not completely understood how scrapie is passed from one animal to the next and apparently healthy sheep infected with scrapie can spread the disease. Sheep and goats are typically infected as young lambs or kids, though adult sheep and goats can become infected.

Scrapie develops slowly in sheep and goats. It usually appears between two and five years after infection; therefore, infected animals rarely show clinical signs of infection before the age of two years. Affected animals may exhibit weight loss, lack of coordination, or swaying. Animals may also startle easily, pull their wool, or “scrape” along a fence or other object. Animals that exhibit signs of scrapie are prohibited from entering the food chain and carcasses must be buried or burned to prevent further spread of the disease.

To test live sheep or goat for scrapie a genetic susceptibility test of the animal is required. The options are either rectal biopsy or third eyelid testing. Genetic susceptibility testing is not currently available in goats.

The laboratory will confirm if the animal has scrapie by examination of the brain stem tissue from a euthanized or slaughtered animal.

### Identification Requirements

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) requires that certain classes of sheep and goats be identified with approved ear tags before moving from a premise. Official ear tags are imprinted with the owners’ unique premises identification (ID) number and a sequential animal number. While the owner may apply and use the tags for routine flock management, the tags are not required to be applied until animals are moved from their premises or commingled with sheep or goats from another farm or ranch. It is the owner’s responsibility to ensure animals are tagged.

The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) issues scrapie program premises ID numbers. White metal or white plastic scrapie ID ear tags are provided by the USDA at no charge. The first shipment of tags includes a free pair of tagging pliers. Sheep and goat owners, livestock market operators or others, such as agricultural science teachers, can call the TAHC toll-free scrapie tag line at 1-866-873-2824, to obtain the premises ID number and supplies. When requesting tags, be prepared to provide a physical shipping address.

Alternative styles of official ear tags may be purchased. A list of

approved vendors may be obtained by calling the scrapie tag line or checking the website: [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/sheep-and-goat-health/national-scrapie-eradication-program/ct\\_scrapie\\_home](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/sheep-and-goat-health/national-scrapie-eradication-program/ct_scrapie_home).



### USDA and TAHC Tagging Requirements

Sheep and Goats that **MUST** be tagged:

- All sheep 18 months of age or older
- All breeding sheep regardless of age
- Sexually intact show or exhibition sheep and goats
- Breeding goats and all goats 18 months and older, that have commingled with sheep
- Sheep and goats moving from their farm to be sold in *interstate* (across state lines) commerce. Always check with the state of destination for requirements. Some states restrict the entry of breeding stock genetically susceptible to scrapie. Texas requires a genetic test for susceptible species.
- Sheep and goats commingled with other sheep and goats from any other farm

#### Additional Tagging Requirements set by the TAHC:

- Sheep and goats moved from their farm to be sold *intrastate* (within the state) must be tagged
- Sexually intact sheep and goats moved to exhibitions must be tagged

### Sheep and Goats exempt from tagging:

- Registered sheep and goats can be identified by tattoo, if they are accompanied by their premise ID number and registration papers. If the animals are moved without registration papers, official ear tags are required.
- Sheep under 18 months of age and goats in slaughter channels.
- Castrated sheep and goats under 18 months of age.

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## Record Keeping

When purchasing animals, ensure that the seller has met the tagging requirements. Do not remove ear tags. These devices make it possible to track scrapie-infected animals to their premise of birth. Purchased animals, commingled with sheep, can be retagged with your official ear tag, if the animals are used for breeding. It is a good idea to record the individual animal numbers and the premise ID number of the seller on your receipt or bill of sale. Records should be maintained for five years.

For disease investigation purposes, records that document the animals' movement and change of ownership must be maintained for five years. Among the records to be kept:

- Official ID number
- Date ID was applied
- Auction market drive-in documents
- Yarding receipts
- Sale tickets
- Invoices
- Waybills

When selling sheep or goats at a livestock market you must provide your scrapie premises ID number to the market at drive-in. List the individual animal numbers on the document and keep the paperwork for five years.

## What if Scrapie is detected in my flock?

If scrapie is detected in your flock or your animals have been exposed to the disease, a TAHC or USDA regulatory veterinarian will work closely with you to consider all options for disease eradication. A customized plan for determining the status of your flock, eradicating the disease if it is present, and a monitoring schedule will be developed.

Several disease-fighting tools may be used to keep your flock healthy. Movement restrictions on animals, removal and testing of the exposed or "high risk" animals in the flock, conducting rectal biopsy or third eyelid testing, and monitoring the flock over several years. Genetics play a major role in susceptibility

to the disease and is used in the management plan. A federal indemnity, or payment of fair market value, is available for "high-risk" animals euthanized for testing.

A state or federal veterinarian also will conduct a complete epidemiological investigation, tracing animals moved into and out of the flock, to determine where the infection may have originated and if exposed animals may have been sold to other producers.



## Scrapie-Free Certification for Flocks

Flock owners interested in certifying their flocks as "Free of Scrapie" can enroll in the Voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP). Information on this program may be obtained by calling Texas' USDA-APHIS-VS office in Austin at 512-383-2400.

### Additional Scrapie Information Links:

- USDA: [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/sheep-and-goat-health/national-scrapie-eradication-program/ct\\_scrapie\\_home](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/sheep-and-goat-health/national-scrapie-eradication-program/ct_scrapie_home)
- National Institute for Animal Agriculture: [www.eradicatescrapie.org](http://www.eradicatescrapie.org)
- American Sheep Industry Association: [www.sheepusa.org](http://www.sheepusa.org)
- American Goat Federation: [www.americangoatfederation.org](http://www.americangoatfederation.org)
- TAHC: [http://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal\\_health/scrapie/scrapie.html](http://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/scrapie/scrapie.html)

Information provided by the  
Texas Animal Health Commission  
P.O. Box 12966 - Austin, TX 78711-2966  
[www.tahc.texas.gov](http://www.tahc.texas.gov)  
800-550-8242

Some information obtained from the United State's Department of Agriculture (USDA)  
Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services

