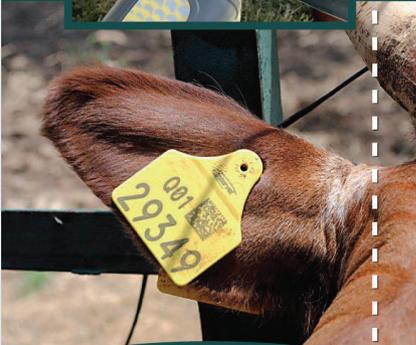


Choose eartags on merit

By Rachele Cloete

BETROUBARE OORPLAATJIES



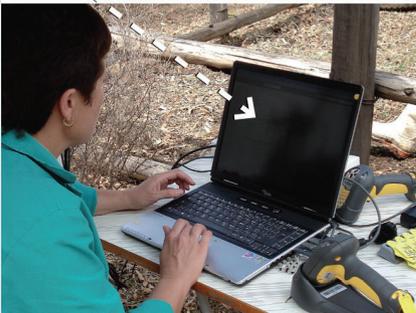
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The choice of a good and reliable eartag with a unique number forms the basis of an animal's production and reproduction data. In other words, it is the stock number allocated to each individual item. Businesses give careful consideration to the choice of stock keeping systems, as well as the method or system to manage their stock. The same should apply to livestock.

Although it is important to buy the correct eartag, it seems as though price often plays the biggest role in the decision about which tag should be bought. Market studies show that inferior tags are more prone to falling off and becoming lost, or that the stamp or the number written on it in pen, quickly fades and becomes unreadable.

What are the financial implications when an animal loses its ear tag? It is much more than the so-called saving when buying the cheap tag. It is associated with factors and actions with financial implications. It includes processing, the cost of labour, stock remedies needed, the presence of a professional person such as the local veterinarian and the recording of data on a recording system.

The question is: Can you really afford the cheap option?

Financial implications

Here are some more industry-specific problems that could arise due to cheap systems:

- The animal's individual identification within the management system could be in doubt, especially if more than one animal loses a tag.
- When blood tests are done, for example to identify the presence of contagious abortion/brucellosis in a herd, and those test results that have to be linked to a specific animal, especially in the case of a positive result that requires judicial follow-up actions regarding zoonosis (diseases that can be transmitted from animal to human), then a cheap eartag may be costly.

- The inability to identify animals individually when stock remedies with withdrawal periods for meat and milk are used, can lead to accountability problems and health implications for the consumer.
- When claims are made against a supplier and compensation is demanded where a vaccine or product did not produce the promised or advertised results, one must be able to identify that animal and confirm it with accurate records.

In order to negotiate better prices and to meet consumer demand, it therefore makes sense that the eartag should give the necessary peace of mind in respect of claims relating to traceability from farm to shelf, advertisements, labelling and proof of the animal's unique status within the group.

Choose wisely

Choose the eartag carefully. It is always good idea to look at the worldwide standards for eartags, such as methods of laser-marking recommended by market leaders. The eartag must comply with certain requirements, for example, it should not be re-useable and tampering should be detectable. Eartags don't pass the test if they can be easily separated or if the section with the peg can be cut loose and replaced with another section.

Therefore, always buy a high-quality tag that complies with production standards. The choice is also important when producers have to make statements, be accountable, answer to compensation claims, or to differentiate their livestock from the rest with reliable production and reproduction records, genetic and health information.

For more information and the cost of the GMPBasic® system, contact Rachele Cloete on 083 630 7181 or email support@gmpbasic.co.za