Sheep and goat
electronic identification

Tasmanian implementation plan **|** *July 2024*

Department of
Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

Tasmanian
Government

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Introduction

Traceability is important not only for biosecurity and product integrity but to maintain market advantages and consumer confidence.

The emergence of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) in Indonesia has increased the risk of an incursion of these diseases into Australia and reaffirmed the need for a robust and harmonised national traceability system.

As part of ongoing national traceability reforms, Agriculture Ministers agreed to work collaboratively with industry to introduce a nationally harmonised electronic identification (eID) system for sheep and goats beginning 1 January 2025.

The transition to eID will mean a change from a visual, mob-based traceability system to a system where individual sheep and goats are traced using electronic identification tags.

This implementation plan provides a high-level outline of the key components for the transition. It is a living document that will be revised as new actions are determined.

Why the move to eID

Individual electronic identification allows for more accurate and timely traceability of animals. In the event of an Emergency Animal Disease (EAD) outbreak or residue incident, it is critical that animal location and movements can be traced quickly to:

- limit spread of the disease;
- minimise the number of animals impacted (including animals destroyed);
- reduce the impact on producers, the supply chain, and the community;
- reduce the time that Australia is restricted from export markets; and
- reduce the number of consumers impacted by food safety issues (in the case of a residue incident).

During the 2001 FMD outbreak in the United Kingdom, animals were not individually tagged with an eID. It took 7 weeks to trace animals, leading to the disease spreading across the country. More than 6 million animals were destroyed, and export market bans were in place for 7 years.

Various traceability studies have found that the use of electronic identification devices provides a more robust and effective traceability system than that which can be achieved from the use of visual tags and mob-based systems. Implementation of eID in Victoria has shown that tracing now takes a matter of minutes, whereas under the visual tag, mob-based system, tracing could take several days.

In addition to improving traceability, eID enables other benefits along the supply chain including:

- more informed flock and herd management decisions such as fertility and health treatments;
- improved individual carcass data and feedback; and
- market access advantage with trading partners through a robust and harmonised traceability system.

*Australia exports **98%** of wool production, **70%** of sheepmeat and **95%** of goatmeat.*

If FMD is detected in Australia, a livestock standstill would be enforced, and Australia would lose access to export markets immediately.

*Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) estimates that an FMD outbreak could have a direct economic impact of **$80 billion**.*

*The Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) estimates there would be a loss of **$300 million** for each week Australia cannot access overseas markets.*

Recovery will be shorter if we strengthen our biosecurity system with improved traceability.

Governance

Biosecurity Tasmania will work closely with industry to facilitate the implementation of sheep and goat eID.

Two industry-led advisory groups have been established to inform and support the implementation:

1. The Sheep Regulatory Advisory Group (SRAG); and
2. The Goat Regulatory Advisory Group (GRAG).

The SRAG and GRAG will provide expert advice and information to Biosecurity Tasmania on how to best transition to eID and will act as a conduit to keep industry informed of key sheep and goat traceability initiatives.

The advisory groups will report to the Biosecurity Tasmania Traceability Governance Group (BTTAG) who are the decision-making body for Tasmania's Primary Produce Traceability Program.

Communication and engagement

There will be ongoing opportunities for industry to engage with Biosecurity Tasmania on the transition to eID. These opportunities will be both face-to-face and online, and will give stakeholders the chance to provide input, feedback, and share information.

An extensive education and support program is needed to ensure all sheep and goat owners and supply chain participants have the knowledge and ability to transition to eID in the required timeframes.

The Tasmanian Red Meat Industry Development Steering Committee through the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association (TFGA) commissioned a report investigating the implementation of eID for sheep and goats in Tasmania. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) has considered this report and has provided feedback to the TFGA on those recommendations that can be implemented, those that can be implemented in part and those that cannot be implemented.

Biosecurity Tasmania will consult with industry on the recommendations and draft roadmap for implementation contained in the report.

Funding

The Commonwealth Government has announced $46.7 million to support traceability improvements in Australia over 3 years. This includes $20.1 million in special purpose payments for co-investment with States and Territories to support on and off-farm improvements, including a transition to eID for sheep and goats. The remaining $26.6 million is for upgrading the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) database.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) has secured $11.66 million dollars over four years to assist industry transition from the current mob-based visual ear tag system to electronic identification (eID) of sheep and goats.

NRE Tas recruited three new eID project positions to work closely with industry to manage the implementation of eID. The project team commenced working with livestock owners and supply chain participants in February 2024.

Traceability regulation

To enable an efficient and effective traceability system, livestock owners and supply chain participants must comply with legislation.

In Tasmania, livestock traceability is regulated under the *Animal (Brands and Movement) Act 1984, Animal (Brands and Movements) Regulations 2014* and the General Biosecurity Direction (Livestock Traceability) 03/22. Legislation covers obligations for property identification, animal identification, record keeping and reporting.

New Biosecurity (Livestock Traceability) Regulations are being developed as subordinate legislation to the *Biosecurity Act 2019*. These new regulations will be supported by a range of policies and standards and will include obligations relating to the electronic identification of sheep and goats.

Once enacted, the Biosecurity (Livestock Traceability) Regulations will replace the *Animal (Brands and Movement) Act 1984, Animal (Brands and Movement) Regulations 2014* and the General Biosecurity Direction (Livestock Traceability) 03/22, all of which will be repealed.

Implementation timeline

As part of ongoing national traceability reforms, Agriculture Ministers agreed to work collaboratively with industry to introduce a nationally harmonised electronic identification (eID) system for sheep and goats beginning 1 January 2025.

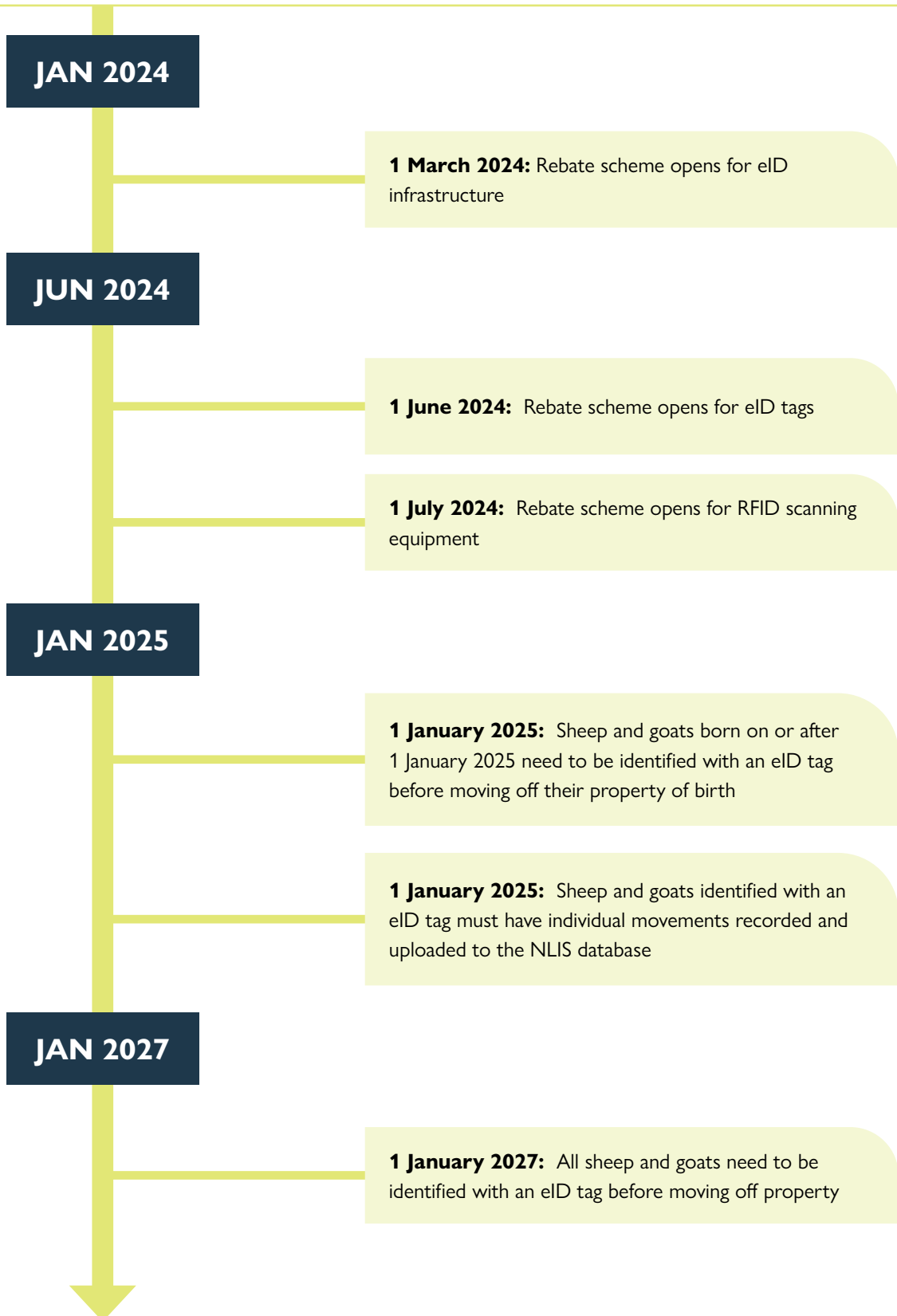Tasmania will transition to eID in two stages:

1 January 2025

- Sheep and goats born on or after 1 January 2025 need to be identified with an NLIS- accredited eID tag before moving off their property of birth; and
- Sheep and goats identified with eID tags must have individual movements recorded and uploaded to the NLIS database.

1 January 2027

- All sheep and goats need to be identified with an NLIS- accredited eID tag before moving off property.

Implementation timeline

JAN 2024

1 March 2024: Rebate scheme opens for eID infrastructure

JUN 2024

1 June 2024: Rebate scheme opens for eID tags

1 July 2024: Rebate scheme opens for RFID scanning equipment

JAN 2025

1 January 2025: Sheep and goats born on or after 1 January 2025 need to be identified with an eID tag before moving off their property of birth

1 January 2025: Sheep and goats identified with an eID tag must have individual movements recorded and uploaded to the NLIS database

JAN 2027

1 January 2027: All sheep and goats need to be identified with an eID tag before moving off property