

Exporting Sheep to the EU from Northern Ireland

All sheep exported from NI to the EU, including those exported to Ireland, must now be identified using XI tags. UK identity tags are no longer accepted within the EU for sheep exported from NI to the EU.

Owners sending sheep to markets which include the option of export to the EU must ensure that all animals sent meet the full requirements for EU export including correct identification. While sheep identified with UK tags applied prior to June 30th 2025 may still enter an EU eligible sale, they will be restricted to onward moves within GB and NI only. To be eligible for onward certification to an EU destination, including Ireland, sheep must be identified with XI tags **before** entering the sale. **Re-identification within the sale will not be possible.**

If sheep identified with UK tags at an EU eligible sale are purchased by ROI or other EU buyers, they will have to return to the presenting flock, be re-identified with XI tags, and be certified directly from flock of origin after meeting any relevant residency requirements.

Where sheep with UK tags are sold to a GB buyer, they may be transported through ROI, for example Dublin to Holyhead, without having to be re-identified.

Laboratory Testing and Identification:

EU export preparation may include laboratory testing. You are advised to ensure sheep being tested are identified with XI tags **before** samples are submitted to the laboratory. This will enable the certifying vet to correlate lab results with the correct animal on export paperwork. Animal tests submitted to the lab using UK identification for animals exported with XI identification may result in confusion and affect the ability of a vet to certify the animals.

Scrapie genotyping: It is possible that some sheep may have been genotyped prior to the requirement for XI tags and therefore their results are under their UK identity. In this case we advise you discuss with your vet who may wish to witness the re-identification of these animals. If your vet will not be the vet who certifies the export (for example if exporting via an export assembly centre) you may wish to ask them to provide confirmation of identity for the centre vet. You may also wish to consider retaining one UK tag. **(the visual only non-EID tag only see below).**

Maintaining Pedigree Identity: Pedigree sheep must also comply with the requirement for identification with XI tags if being exported to the EU. If animals are registered with a pedigree society with a UK identity and it is necessary to maintain a reference to their UK number, you are advised to contact your breed society to see what evidence they require to correlate the new XI identity with the previous UK identity. It is suggested that one, visual only, UK tag may be retained in addition to re-identification with XI tags. Note, the UK EID tag **MUST** be removed when re-identifying with XI tags as failure to do so will result in errors when scanning identity.

Guidance for live animal exports is available on the DAERA website [Live Animals Exports | Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#)

If you have any questions regarding exports you can contact DAERA by emailing daeratradeexports@daera-ni.gov.uk