

## How to Permanently Identify Your Goat

For permanent identification recognizable by the USDA and various goat registries, a metal tag on his collar will not cut it! Your goat must be tattooed, microchipped, or ear tagged. Permanent ID is required to receive a certificate of veterinary inspection (CVI) for legally taking your goat across state lines, and for conforming to certain public land area regulations, events, etc. It may also help reunite you with your goat should he ever be lost or stolen.

*“I don’t know whether my goat has a permanent ID.”*

Unless your goat has ear tags, an existing identification may not be obvious. The first place to look is inside the ears. Take an alcohol swab and thoroughly clean the insides, then shine a flashlight through from the back. Tattoos will show as a series of small dots inside the ear. LaMancha type goats without external ears may be tattooed under the tail. Lift the tail and wipe the underside clean. Look for a series of dots in the bare skin on either side.

If there are no tattoos, you can ask your vet to scan your goat for microchips. Microchips are placed either at the base of the ear or the underside of the tail.

*If your goat does NOT have a permanent ID...*

It’s time he got one! To be clear, your goats should have been given a permanent ID by the breeder. It may be worthwhile to contact the breeder and see if they can tag/tattoo/microchip your goat for you. Ideally, the goat’s permanent ID should reflect its place of birth.

If getting a permanent ID from the breeder is not feasible, you need to call your State Veterinary Office. They will assign you a premises ID number and herd/scrapie ID number. Once you have these numbers you need to decide how you wish to identify your goat. You may be able to get free government-provided ear tags and an applicator depending on whether the free tag program was funded that year. Ear tags are probably the easiest route, but many packgoat owners prefer not to use them for aesthetic reasons, and because ear tags sometimes get lost, leaving a hole or notch in the ear and requiring the goat to be re-tagged.

Tattoos are another common ID method, and for these you will need to acquire a tattooing kit. These can be found in livestock supply catalogues, feed stores, or borrowed from a livestock producer in your area. Tattoos can be applied inside one or both ears. Usually, the herd ID is tattooed in the right ear and the goat's individual ID number is tattooed in the left. For earless LaMancha type goats, tattoos are applied in the loose skin on the underneath side of the tail referred to as the "tail web". Green or black ink is used for tattooing, but green usually shows up best.

Microchips are a more recent ID method that is gaining popularity for its ease of use and resistance to tampering, getting lost, or fading away over time. Microchips are most commonly placed in the underneath side of the tail but can also be placed at the base of the ear where it joins the back of the head.

If you are not comfortable tagging, tattooing, or microchipping your goat, speak to your vet or a knowledgeable goat person in your area. If you only own a few goats, it may be more cost effective to have a vet ID your goats than to buy the necessary equipment to do it yourself. On the other hand, if you have a lot of goats or plan to go into breeding, it pays to buy the equipment and learn how to use it yourself.