

UHF ear tagging of piglets



All staff tagging piglets should have read the associated risk assessment and method statement (RAMS).

All suitable PPE must be worn: gloves, safety boots, overalls, eye protection.

Tagging piglets is best carried out at processing, as piglets are already being handled and will be in a fit state to be tagged.

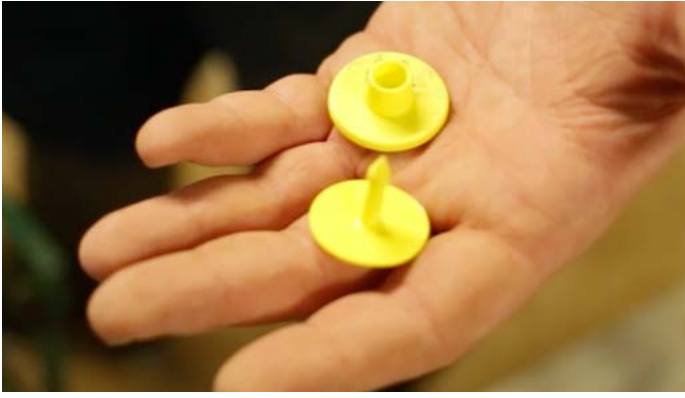
1. Assemble equipment:

- Tagging pliers – with spare pins
- UHF ear tags (male and female components) NB male components can be sharp. **Do not place these in pockets without first lining pockets with suitable puncture-proof material**
- UHF ear tag reader* (N.B. This SOP was created, based on the use of the **MS Handy Reader – UHF**; other readers are available and may record in a different way)
- Tablet loaded with MS office or Notebook
- Scales capable of weighing at least 0–25kg x 0.01kg*
- A suitable box in which to place a whole litter on top of the scales (large enough to ensure piglets are not overcrowded/injured by litter mates)

* only required when recording individual birth weights

- Suitable replaceable liner/cleaning materials (ensuring this is non-slip for piglets)
 - A suitable surface/trolley for the scales to rest on, to reduce bending of back during operations
2. Place clean box onto scales.
 3. Set scales to zero.
 4. Piglets are tagged by litter. Taking care to avoid injury from the sow, carefully collect the litter and place them into the box as a group.
 5. Record the weight of the entire litter.
 6. Load male component onto pin on pliers, load female component (with the flat/non-numbered side facing the spike on the male component) under the spring-loaded clip on the pliers.
 7. One at a time, remove piglets from the box.
 8. Place the piglet in the crook of the left arm.
 9. Holding the piglet's ear carefully between the thumb and forefinger of the left hand, take the tagging pliers in the right hand.
 10. **NB Take care not to puncture/crush fingers while applying the tag, with either the tag or the pliers.**

Male and female components of UHF tags



Ensure pigs are safely cradled under the arm, tagging is done in one swift motion



To record individual birth weights, check the ear tag number once tagged, return the piglet to the sow, and record the ear tag number and weight, read from the scale



11. Tags should be placed as shown in the video, taking care to avoid ear veins and at a suitable distance from the face and the edge of the ears.
12. The tag is applied in one swift motion, as if ear notching. The tag must be placed in the left ear, with the female/numbered component 'inside' the pinna, closest to the piglet's cheek, so the male component comes 'down' from above the ear.
13. Carefully withdraw the tagging pliers immediately.
14. Repeat this process for the whole litter.
15. Once the entire litter is tagged, the litter can be scanned. Select 'Litter', manually enter the sow number using the number pad and press the 'O' button in the centre of the arrow keys.
16. Manually enter the boar number and press the 'O' button in the centre of the arrow keys.

Apply components to the tagger via the spring-loaded clips



All piglets should be tagged in the left ear for easier identification and to help with retention in abattoir



Piglets are seen nursing 5 minutes after tagging has been completed



17. The scanner will then start to emit – (the wave is produced from the back of the device, not the edge/front), move this over the pigs; each time it detects an animal it will beep and vibrate.
18. Once the number on the screen is the same as the number of piglets, press the 'O' button in the centre of the arrow keys. This data is now stored on the device.
19. Remove piglets one at a time, and as this is done, record (on either the tablet or the notepad) the piglet's ear tag number and the net weight on the scales (this allows individual birth weights to be calculated).*
20. Repeat the process until all piglets are returned to the sow.*
21. Clean/refresh/replace litter material in the box (dependent on unit biosecurity protocols for processing piglets).

Risk Assessment – Tagging and weighing pigs

Date:

Review Date: Continuous

Task	Hazard	People at risk	Likelihood	Severity	Risk rating	Control of risk	Action required	Date completed
		How might they be harmed?					By who/when	
Tagging and weighing piglets	Manual handling of piglets	Back injury/RSI	2	3	6	Ensure staff are handling animals appropriately. Weigh pigs on day of birth to reduce weight of handled animals. Proper use of lifting and manual handling techniques.	Training and provision of RA to all involved	
	Ear tagging process/ ear tags/ear tagging pliers	Penetrating hand injury/ pinch/crush from ear tag/taggers	2	3	6	Only trained staff to apply tags to pigs. Care to be taken on who is handling pigs and who is tagging. Majority of pigs to be tagged while unrestrained.	Ongoing	
Weighing pigs into finisher/ at week 11 in finisher	Injury from aggressive animals	Bites/goring/ crush injury	2	3	6	Ensure staff are appropriately trained in handling animals. Ensure pig boards are used. Ensure handling system is appropriate for purpose, and maintained.	Ensure only appropriate staff carry out weighing	
	Injury from gates/handling system	Crush/punch injury	2	2	4	Ensure appropriately designed handling system is used. Ensure staff are aware of all potential pinch /crush points on gates/hinges/ bolts, etc.	Ensure control measures put in place and all staff aware of potential crush points	

Data can be retrieved by placing a fully charged device onto the MS Schippers docking station, turning the device on and selecting 'Synchronise' from the menu, and then selecting 'OK'. After a few seconds, the device will display a status bar to show the progress of the data being uploaded to the Schippers server. This data will then be returned to the operator via email as an .XML file the following morning.

No practical technique for recording individual piglet birth weights with the UHF scanner currently exists, therefore the notebook/tablet is still needed, should individual weights be required.

Further information:

To be used in conjunction with the **AHDB Pork Focus Farm: UHF Ear Tagging video**.

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