



## Off farm disposal of cattle – tagging and other legal requirements

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### Introduction

*Knackeries contribute significantly to the Victorian economy and provide an important service to rural Victoria and should be supported by farmers.*

Knackeries safely remove and dispose of dead and dying livestock from the Victorian landscape.

### Economic importance of knackeries

Knackeries provide employment in rural areas and assist in disease surveillance programs. They supply important by-products to the rendering industry where heat-treated meat, bone and offal are used as fertiliser, or as meat and bone meal which is included in pig and poultry feeds. Selected meat is used as pet food and bait for the crayfish industry and the hides are exported for use in leather goods industries.

### Correct disposal of dead cattle

The practice of on farm disposal of dead animals has its hazards and costs, which are avoided by using a licensed knackery. Disposing of animals to a licensed knackery with quality control systems in place decreases the risk of disease transmission to animals and man. Other advantages include not incurring the cost and inconvenience of digging a deep burial pit, not sacrificing valuable agricultural land and avoiding the risk of polluting underground water supplies.

There is a risk of prosecution if a farmer provides dead animals or dead animal parts to another person other than a knackery operator, where they may be guilty of offences under the *Meat Industry Act 1993*. Supplying animals or animal parts to people for cray bait or for dog food would fall into this category.

### NLIS and knackeries

The National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS) is Australia's system for identifying and tracking beef and dairy cattle. For this system to work efficiently, cattle being consigned to a Victorian knackery must be NLIS identified.

The NLIS system was introduced at the request of the cattle industries, which have foreseen the critical importance of traceability of animals and animal products

for the maintenance of viable beef and dairy industries. Its success depends heavily on the cooperation of all livestock owners.

### Changed regulations

From 1 January 2005 all cattle except dead bobby calves dispatched from a Victorian property to a knackery must be NLIS ear tagged or have an NLIS approved rumen bolus. Dead bobby calves must still be tagged but it may be with a non NLIS device, in the form of a bobby calf ear tag which can be purchased from DPI or may in the future be supplied by the knackery operator.

### NLIS allows full traceability for disease monitoring

The NLIS system has replaced the previous tail tag system because it allows for not only identifying the last property of residence of the animal but records all of the properties where the animal has been in its life. Our overseas customers are demanding this lifetime traceability as part of the quality assurance programs widely adopted in the meat processing industry. This is also true of many of our larger domestic customers particularly the large supermarket chains.

The detailed tracing information provided by NLIS will be invaluable in the event of having to trace animals that might be infected with an infectious exotic disease such as foot and mouth disease. In the case of BSE (mad cow disease) this traceability and monitoring is required to satisfy many of our international trading partners of our BSE free status.

DPI may also use the NLIS identification system to trace the source of animals infected with important endemic diseases, an activity which is vital to the success of control and eradication programs.

### NLIS database information recording

When cattle are sold through the saleyard system the individual animal number of the NLIS device is transferred in the Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) database from the vendor's PIC to the purchaser's PIC. This also occurs when animals are sold for slaughter either through a saleyard or direct to the abattoir where the animal's NLIS

information is removed from the vendor's record in the database. Disposing of cattle through a licensed knackery helps maintain the integrity of the NLIS system.

### **Penalties for non NLIS identified cattle**

If cattle other than bobby calves are dispatched to a knackery, whether dead or alive, they must be NLIS identified before they leave the consignor's property. Failure to do so could mean the person responsible for the dispatch of the animal will receive an infringement notice or face prosecution. The person who transports the animal together with the person who processes the animal could receive the same penalty.

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