Tag read rates - 2011

ScotEID have recently received the statistical analysis of EID sheep tags read during the calendar year 2011. The statistical analysis was carried out by Biomathematics and Statistics Scotland.

A total of 3,370,762 sheep were read within 228,677 batches at both markets and abattoirs acting as Critical Control Points.

The data for each individual tag type concerns batches where only these tag types were present, amounting to 2,558,330 reads. So the read rates of individual tag types are mostly of sheep during their first move through a CCP that have been recently tagged.

The average batch read rate is 94.9%. It was 95.1% in 2010. The average batch read rate is the one most important to farmers, particularly for double tagged sheep.

The read rate over all sheep is 93.5%. In 2010 the overall read rate was 93.8%. The average batch read rate is slightly higher than the overall read rate because the majority of small batches have a higher statistical read rate than the minority of large batches.

815,466 sheep with mixed tag types were read and the overall read rate of these sheep was 92.18%. Most of these sheep will have been tagged for a longer time.

This is the first year that ScotEID has been able to study the read rates of older tags i.e. those which have remained in sheep for more than one year. The indications are that read rates decrease with time by about 3% over 600 days. This would explain the lower read rate of batches with mixed tag types, and also the slightly lower overall figures from the reads of sheep that have been tagged in 2010, usually read as gimmers in 2011.

Bob Yuill, who manages ScotEID, commented that ScotEID had noted to the European Commission that it might be possible to improve the read rates incrementally over time, but evidence indicates that this might be difficult. "I think we will be doing really well just to keep to a 95% average batch read rate" – "The tag manufacturers are doing a good job, as we can see improvement from last year for individual tag types, but the fact that tags or EID transponders degrade over time is concerning – for instance in June 2011 the new season lamb showed an immediate jump of 1.5% in read rates"

However, ScotEID are quite clear that given the current read rates Scottish farmers should not be concerned, as the database provides immediate real time traceability for all EID sheep moving through CCPs. Mr Yuill commented "ScotEID gives us that bit of flexibility to ease the burden on sheep farmers, but they must keep working to tag properly and choose tags that best suit their sheep and production system"

Further information:

Read rates can be affected by many factors which may have a stronger effect than tag type; although not an exhaustive list, the following lists some of these factors:

- Tags lost – on farm, during transport or at CCPs
- Tags with transponders missing - fallen out

- Transponders not working due to various factors
- Transponders broken during tag insertion
- Readers failing to read a readable tag (The readers generally read over 99% of readable tags, but will miss on occasion)

ScotEID maintains day to day monitoring of all Critical Control Points (CCPs) in relation to reader effectiveness and tag read rates. ScotEID are able to identify reader problems, and advise farmers if their own read rates fall below an acceptable level.

Tags with more than 50,000 reads

	% read rate
Roxan - Tagfaster	95.64
Shearwell Data - Auto Set tag	94.68
Cox Agri - Qwik Eid	94.14
Ritchey Auto EID	93.73
Allflex Electromatic	93.11
PTS - Foldover EID lamb tag*	93.06
Allflex EID Bubblegum	92.83
Shearwell Data EID Set tag	92.75

* Note – 'PTS - Foldover EID lamb tag' is distributed by the following companies - Symtag, Denimex, Ketchum, Countryside Services, Stocktrace and Tenbury Farm Supplies.

Tags between 1,000 and 50,000 reads

	% read rate
Dalton I Roto tag	96.11
Dalton 25mm tag button	95.00
Dalton 25mm tag loop	94.68
Cox Agri - Zee tag button	94.60
Ritchey- Hauptner button	93.77
Ritchey- Snapp tag	93.03
Allflex EID Babe	92.83
Allflex FDX lightweight button	90.78
Ritchey - RD 2000	87.62

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