

TATTOO INSTRUCTIONS (NAPA)

How you tattoo your cattle is very important.

It is one of the most critical steps in the registration of cattle.

It is the “permanent identification” of the animal that will – for the rest of that animal’s life – be used to cross check with the registration paper to match the individual’s identity.

The tattoo is not a perfect system. They tend to fade over time and become difficult to read.

[If you are trying to read a faded tattoo, it can help to use a flashlight, shining through the ear from the back, to better read the mark.] Other options for permanent identification are things such as microchip implants, which become costly, and also are not perfect.

NAPA utilizes the ink tattoo in the animal’s ear and so recommends that proper steps in tattooing are taken, so that you will achieve a clear, long lasting mark.

As NAPA members, you have been requested to register your tattoo/herd prefix with our Registrars Office (CLRC). This is the step that determines which set of **letters** you, and **ONLY** you, are allowed to use in identifying your cattle.

NAPA recommends that you select a tattoo herd prefix consisting of one to four **letters**.

No other Piedmontese breeder will be allowed to use the same letter sequence as you.

The owner of the calf at the time of birth is responsible to tattoo their herd letters in that animals ear.

Members can select to use either the right ear or the left ear, at the time they register their herd letters with NAPA. The entire tattoo sequence (herd letters, number designation, and year letter) are all tattooed into that same ear. However, please note, in the USA the right ear is used by Federal Veterinarians to tattoo any such bangs test ID codes as may be needed – therefore, it is wise to select the Registry Tattoo to be done in the left ear.

The second portion of the tattoo is the individual animal identification **number** that you chose to give it. This is a **number**, from 1 and upwards. You may use 1 for the first calf born, 2 for the second, and so on – or you may devise a system which matches your record keeping best.

The important thing to remember is that **NO TWO ANIMALS CAN EVER HAVE THE SAME EXACT TATTOO**.

The final portion of the tattoo is the year **letter**. This is a standard letter code, used by most breeds in the world, to represent the year the calf was born. The code uses a specific letter for each year, following alphabetical order.

Year 2000 – K

Year 2001 - L

Year 2002 - M

Year 2003 - N

Year 2004 - P, and so on.

The letters “I”, “O”, “Q” and “V” are not used as year letters.

Once the letter “Z” is reached, the next year will start over at “A”.

So, the only portion of the animal’s tattoo that you must chose differently for each animal in any given year, is the identification **number**.

Tattoos read as “**letter** sequence” [your personal registered herd prefix]

“**number**” [your pick for each animal]

“year **letter**” [must correspond with the year of birth.]

Example: ABC Cattle Company registers the letters ABC as their herd prefix/tattoo.

In 2001, they would tattoo ABC 1L, ABC 2L, ABC 3L, etc.

In 2002, they can tattoo ABC 1M, ABC 2M, ABC 3M, etc.

From this tattoo, we now have permanent information to match the registration certificate.

We can read the animal’s ear at a show or a sale, years later, and know that ABC Cattle Company owned the animal at birth, and it was born in that certain year.

It is **very** important to use the sequence as described. (Letters, number, letter)

With the number always separating the herd prefix from the year letter, there can be no confusion on the letter designations.

Example: ABC Cattle Company registers the letters ABC as their herd prefix/tattoo.

ABCD Cattle Company registers the letters ABCD as their prefix.

If people in-correctly tattoo animals with the herd prefix, followed by the year letter, with the animal number last [ABC M1 or ABCD M1] when we reach the year letter of “D” in this example, the tattoos will read ABC D1 for ABC Cattle Company and ABCD D1 for ABCD Cattle Company. When you are trying to read a faded tattoo, or even a clear one, you can see how confusing this would be. It also increases the chances for error in the reading of documents.

When people purchase cattle from you, and you show them a registration certificate with a tattoo registered for your animal – the buyer may be reading those tattoos in the physical ear of the animal to confirm identity. At a Show or a Sale, selection committees may read the animal’s ear tattoo to verify that the animal is the one represented on the registry certificate.

Always report the exact tattoo that you have placed in the animals ear. If you made a mistake, and placed the year letter ahead of the number designation, please report it as such.

NAPA recommends that you tattoo the calves as they are born, so that you do not forget to do it at all. However, this means the tattoo may fade even more over time, and it can be difficult to fit a larger tattoo prefix (up to 4 digits) with number and year letter into a small ear.

It helps to keep a pair of scissors and a clean cloth in the tattoo kit. Always cut as much of the hair as possible out of the inside of the ear to be tattooed, first. Then rub the ear with the cloth to remove grim and oils. Use at least twice as much tattoo ink as you think is necessary ! Coat the clean ear with a good layer of ink (I like green) and immediately tattoo the herd letters into the top part of the ear, between the ribs. Then, immediately rub additional tattoo ink into the holes. Next, coat the lower portion (between the ribs) of the ear with fresh ink and immediately tattoo the number and year letter below the herd prefix. Again, rub additional ink into the holes.

By trying to place the tattoo portions between the ‘ribs’ of the ear, you can avoid excessive bleeding, which weakens the tattoo. Do not let the ink dry out on the ear before you get the tattoo gun in place. You are attempting to drive the wet ink into the holes you are puncturing. I like the ink in a roller applicator, so you can rub directly across the punctures repeatedly.

If you have any questions, please call or email.

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