It is important to individually identify each of your goats. You should have an easy way
to tell one goat from another as well as having a permanent or semi-permanent identification on
each goat to confirm who they are. These identifications will help you keep records on which
goat got a specific health treatment and also help trace a goat to its parents and offspring.
Identification can also help to find the owner of a goat that is lost or stolen.

In a small herd you often know each goat by name and matching description. However, your
family or friends who feed for you when you are away need a simple way to tell your goats apart.
One easy way is by having each goat wear a collar, leg band or ear tag with their own individual
number or name on it. The North American Packgoat Association recommends that when your
goats are out hiking, each goat should wear a collar with a tag on it containing, at minimum, your
name and phone number. This way your goat can be traced back to you if it gets separated from
you on the trail.

However, collars, eartags and leg bands can fall off. Collars can also get caught on fences
and choke your goat. Most goat associations require your goat to have a permanent form of
identification called a tattoo before they will allow you to register the goat and allow it to be
recorded in the pedigree files for that association. Veterinarians also need to be able to identify
your animal by a permanent or semi-permanent identification when they fill out rabies slips or
health certificates on your goats. Additionally, the United States Department of Agriculture
(USDA) has a national program to eliminate a rare disease called Scrapie from the United States.
Scrapie is a fatal, degenerative disease affecting the central nervous system of sheep and goats.
As part of their eradication program, the USDA requires that almost all goats wear “official
Scrapie IDs”. This way if a goat shows up with the disease, they can use the Scrapie ID to trace
the goat back to the herd where it was born and make sure no other goats in that herd have come
down with the disease.

Microchips (also known as electronic implantable device or EID) are also a semi-
permanent identification. The USDA permits their use as long as 1) the microchip is recorded on
the breed registration papers AND 2) the owner travels with a microchip reader AND 3) the
microchips are 15-digit ISO-compliant ‘840’ numbered chips. Without a microchip reader you
cannot read the chip to tell the number. Only a few breed associations such as the National
Pygmy Goat Association accept microchips as a sole form of ID. Most other goat breed
associations only allow them as an addition to another type of ID, usually a tattoo.
Scrapie Identification Requirements

Official scrapie identification is now be required for goats 18 months of age or older and for all bucks and does under 18 months of age moving for purposes other than slaughter or feeding for slaughter. This may make you think that young wethers do not need Scrapie Identification. However, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, requires that all goats at the NYS Fair and at county fairs have official Scrapie IDs. These IDs serve as a semi-permanent or permanent ID for your goat.

What types of IDs are considered official scrapie IDs?

If your goat is registered with a breed registry (for example, American Dairy Goat Association (ADGA) or American Boer Goat Association (ABGA), their tattoo for the breed registry is considered their official scrapie identification as long as the goat is accompanied off farm by their registration papers and their tattoo is legible and matches the tattoo listed on their registration papers. Wethers cannot be “registered” with a breed association. However, ADGA will issue a Certificate of Ownership for dairy goat wethers as long as they are properly tattooed and you provide the name and location of their farm of origin. Additionally, ABGA will issue a Record of Pedigree for Boer wethers if at least one of their parents is registered with ABGA, they are properly tattooed and information is provided for their herd prefix, herd name, date of birth and three generation history.

If your goat is not registered or recorded with a breed association or you think there might be times when your goats will not have their registration papers with them or the tattoos might not be legible, you need to request a premise identification number (PIN, also called a premise code) for your farm from the New York USDA Veterinary Services Office (518) 858-1424. Keep in mind that if your herd is registered with a breed association you can request that USDA use this code as your PIN assuming that that code is not already taken. Once you get your PIN, you can officially scrapie identify your goat by tattooing the goat with your PIN and with an unique individual animal ID that distinguishes this goat from the other goats born at your farm. For example, 1908 might refer to the eighth kid born at your farm in 2019. Remember that Lamanchas should be tattooed in their tail webs rather than in their ears.

Rather than tattooing your goat with its official USDA Scrapie ID, you also have the option of putting an Official Scrapie Eartag in its ear. These official tags include your state postal code (NY for New York) and your farm’s PIN as well as a 4 or 5 digit number to identify the individual goat in your herd. Several tag manufacturers make official Scrapie IDs, for example, Premier Sheep (800-282-6631), Hasco Tag (859-261-6000), and National Brand & Tag (606-261-2035). You will have to pay for tags but you can choose colors or designs you prefer. Currently (2019), USDA will provide up to 80 plastic official Scrapie ID eartags (free-of-charge) to goat raisers who have not received free eartags from USDA in the past.

If you buy a goat, it is the seller’s responsibility to have the goat properly Scrapie ID’ed before you purchase the goat. The goat should have either an official Scrapie eartag in its ear or tattoo in its ears or tailweb. If the animal’s registration tattoo is being used as the Scrapie ID then the original owner should provide you with a completed application for registry or recordation. To request official Scrapie ID eartags, a premises ID number (PIN) or both, call 1-866-USDA-Tag (866-873-2824). They can also provide you with more information on Scrapie identification.
Suggested Activities

1) Get together with your 4-H group to identify the different types of equipment used for identification. Help collect several examples of different types of identification to handle and discuss at the meeting.*

2) Find out more about Scrapie and make a poster or flier that provides more information about the disease.

3) Find out what the Animal Disease Traceability Program is and make a poster or presentation about its development.

*Activity suitable for cloverbud participation