National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) requirements for cattle destined for live export

The live cattle export trade is an extremely valuable industry to Victoria and Australia. Ensuring accurate traceability in livestock selected for export markets maintains Australia’s reputation as an exporter of ‘clean’ and ‘safe’ livestock.

LIVE CATTLE EXPORT MARKET

Australia’s access to live cattle export markets relies on our trading partners having confidence that the livestock they are importing are healthy, disease free and residue free. Australia is able to provide this assurance on the basis that the cattle selected for export are traceable throughout their life.

All cattle owners or businesses trading in cattle have obligations under the Livestock Disease Control Act 1994 (the LDCA) to notify the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) database of movements of cattle, including those being exported overseas.

This requirement underpins the integrity of livestock traceability for cattle, for both trading partners and the government.

Failure of cattle producers and exporters to meet traceability requirements under the NLIS could cause our trading partners to question the integrity of the system and may lead to a loss of valuable export markets.

With the live export industry worth $1 billion a year to the Australian economy it is important that we all protect the reputation of our industry.

Agriculture Victoria can issue fines of over $400 per offence or prosecute producers or companies that fail to meet the legislative requirements for cattle traceability. Prosecution may result in fines of up to $20,000.

Remember, traceability underpins your industry.

NLIS (CATTLE)

The NLIS is Australia’s system for identifying and tracking beef and dairy cattle for food safety, disease control and market access purposes.

The NLIS enables cattle to be reliably identified and tracked from their property of birth to slaughter, protecting the reputation of Australia’s and Victoria’s cattle industry as a supplier of ‘clean’ wholesome beef and dairy products, providing a competitive advantage in domestic and export markets.

The NLIS involves the permanent identification of cattle. It commences on their property of birth through the use of an ear tag containing a microchip encoded with a unique, unalterable number. Details about cattle identified with NLIS tags, including ownership changes and information that may affect their suitability for human consumption, are recorded on a national database managed by NLIS Ltd.

Cattle movements must be uploaded to the NLIS database

Victorian producers are required to notify the NLIS database when they receive NLIS tagged cattle directly from another property, including cattle arriving on agistment.

Notification must occur within seven (7) days of the arrival of the cattle or before the cattle move off the property, whichever comes first.

It is the responsibility of the person receiving the cattle, or the person who introduces the cattle onto the property, to conduct the uploads.

In the case of cattle selected for live export it may be the company completing the export that is responsible for the uploading of movement information to the database. If unsure producers should check with the agent or export company representative to ensure the responsible person is identified.

All movements of livestock must include an accurate and complete vendor declaration.

Producers are required to advise the database of the following information:
microchip or NLIS number for each head
- date of the movement
- Property Identification Code (PIC) of the property of last residence (which must be provided by the consignor)
- PIC of the property to which the cattle were consigned
- Vendor declaration serial number.

Producers purchasing cattle at a saleyard are not required to notify the NLIS database of the movement of these animals. It is the saleyard operator’s responsibility to scan these cattle and report relevant movement information to the database.

Live exported cattle must be transferred to the PIC EEEEEE (8Es)

Cattle that are selected for live export are usually moved from a quarantine or holding property to the port of departure. From here the cattle will loaded on the vessel and sent for live export.

In Victoria the port may be Tullamarine Airport or a number of shipping ports. Each port has its own PIC.

Cattle must be transferred onto the correct port of departure PIC and then transferred to 8Es signifying cattle have been live exported. Cattle must be on the port PIC prior to departure and must be transferred to 8Es within 7 days of departure.

Failure to transfer livestock to 8Es means that those livestock will be registered against a property in Victoria and will not be removed from the database.

In the event of a food safety or disease incident this will make tracing extremely difficult. It may also be extremely difficult to prove to trading partners that these ‘extra’ cattle on properties are actually not resident in the country anymore.

Using the NLIS database

The NLIS Database is administered by NLIS Ltd. It records livestock movements and allows you to run reports for your property.

To record livestock movements and other transactions on the database, you must have a database account, or authorise someone else to record transactions on your behalf. Even if you do this, you should have an account so you can check that the database information for your property is correct.

Live Export companies will need to apply for a live export account with the NLIS database. Exporters will also have to nominate the PICs that they are utilising as depots or quarantine facilities as well as the relevant port PICs that cattle will shipped out from.

For further information, contact the NLIS Database Helpline on 1800 654 743 or visit www.nlis.mla.com.au

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- All movements of cattle, to a different PIC (including Port PICs and to 8Es) MUST be transferred on the NLIS database within seven (7) days or before they move off again, whichever is sooner.
- The cattle industry relies on the integrity of NLIS, to provide both trading partners and the government confidence that the tracing information of cattle is accurate and available in the event that it is required.
- Failure to meet the legislative requirements for the movement of livestock will not only result in fines and possible prosecution but may also result in the loss of key export markets. Don’t allow yourself to be responsible for damaging Australia’s valuable livestock markets.

CONTACTS

For further information in relation to NLIS requirements in Victoria or live cattle export information, please contact the Victorian NLIS Helpline on 1800 678 779 during business hours or visit www.agriculture.vic.gov.au and follow the links to NLIS (Cattle).

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