Lifetime traceable
An emerging market requirement

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The NLIS – Australia’s system for the tracing of cattle

The NLIS involves the permanent identification of cattle commencing on their property of birth through the attachment of a white NLIS Breeder Tag. Details about cattle identified with NLIS devices, including their movement history, are then recorded on the national NLIS database managed by Meat and Livestock Australia.

Through the NLIS, cattle can be accurately traced from property of birth to slaughter. Victoria is leading the world in the implementation of this ‘best practice’ system.

Consumer expectations have changed

Consumers in Australia and overseas are very ‘food safety’ conscious. They expect that suppliers of food products will have the ability to quickly and accurately locate and remove from sale potentially harmful items, if the need arises.

As a consequence, buyers are beginning to show a preference for cattle that can be quickly and accurately traced back, through the use of the NLIS, to all properties on which they have resided. To assist buyers seeking to purchase cattle that are fully traceable, the National Vendor Declaration (NVD)/Waybill (Edition 1) includes a question as to whether the cattle in the consignment are ‘lifetime traceable’ or not.
Lifetime traceable

'Lifetime traceable' is a status assigned to NLIS identified cattle where every property of residence in an animal’s life has been registered on the NLIS database. A vendor is only permitted* to tick the 'lifetime traceable' box on an NVD/waybill form where:

- All of the cattle in the consignment carry a white NLIS Breeder device that was attached before they left their property of birth, and

- No gap exists in the movement history of the cattle as recorded on the NLIS database, i.e. if cattle in the consignment are leaving a property that is not their property of birth, all transactions must have been registered on the NLIS database.

How to ensure purchased cattle are ‘lifetime traceable’

If you are interested in purchasing store or breeding cattle at a saleyard, check before bidding that:

- every animal in the consignment is correctly identified with a white NLIS Breeder Tag,

- the vendor has answered ‘Yes’ to the ‘lifetime traceable’ NVD/Waybill question, and

- the saleyard has scanned the lot and has verified the ‘lifetime traceable’ status of every animal in the lot.

Following the purchase of the cattle, provide your Property Identification Code (PIC) to the selling agent and ensure that the saleyard registers the movement of the cattle to your property on the NLIS database.

Given the emerging importance of traceability, the cattle that you purchase may be discounted when you sell them if you are not able to declare them ‘lifetime traceable’*.
Check the ‘lifetime traceable’ status of cattle on your property

Producers can check whether the cattle listed on the NLIS database as residing on their property carry a 'lifetime traceable' status. To register to use the database, go to www.nlis.mla.com.au and click on the 'create a new account' button and enter your PIC, name and contact details. There is no charge associated with using the NLIS database.

Further information

For general information about the NLIS and tagging requirements in Victoria, contact the Department of Environment and Primary Industries’ NLIS Helpline on 1800 678 779 during business hours.

*Any false, misleading or unverified statement made by a vendor on a NVD/Waybill form may result in prosecution and/or civil action.

#As at 1 January 2004, to maintain the 'lifetime traceable' status of cattle, the NLIS Business Rules require that transactions must have been registered on the NLIS database within 28 days of the date of the movement. In the future, the time period allowed for the registration of movements is likely to be reduced. For movements that occur after the commencement of the Livestock Producer Assurance (LPA) program in mid 2004, in order to maintain the 'lifetime traceable' status of cattle, the serial number of the NVD/Waybill (Edition 1) accompanying the consignment will need to be registered on the NLIS database along with the vendor’s PIC, buyer’s PIC and NLIS device details.