

# IDENTIFICATION AND TRACEABILITY IN ARGENTINA

## A PUBLIC HEALTH AND ASSURANCE TOOL

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Producer registration and livestock identification in Argentina date back as far as the early 19th century, for both large and small livestock. Argentina has been conducting extensive movement controls in slaughterhouses and processing establishments since the 1980s. In 2008, this involved more than 37 million cattle, 3 million sheep, 4 million pigs, 1 million equids and 1 billion poultry.

Initially, identification was on a group basis, with fire-branding linking each animal with its owner, except for animals on the pedigree register, which were tattooed individually. From 2003, there has been much progress towards the individual identification of cattle slaughtered for meat export, to enhance quality assurance in the health and safety of products offered to consumers. Since 2006, individual identification has gradually been made compulsory for Argentina's national cattle herd, with all animals being ear-tagged at weaning.

Since 2001, export cattle establishments have been registered for compliance with the specific requirements of export markets and arrangements have been introduced to provide for the individual traceability of animals to the slaughterhouse. In 2006, sheep-exporting producers were added but, in this case, animals were identified on a group basis. Since 2009, individual identification and management has been made compulsory for equids slaughtered for meat export. Currently there are 265,000 cattle establishments (56 million head of cattle) in Argentina.

Since the introduction of cattle traceability, significant progress has been made, starting with identification on a group basis and progressing to the individual identification (not using electronic methods) of cattle and the management and control of stock and animal movements.

The animals sent for slaughter are killed and processed in one of 298 meat-processing plants, and 641 processing plants and stores subject to official inspection by SENASA. For meat, management is on a batch basis, applying the highest sanitary and hygiene standards to obtain products that provide for retrospective control and the withdrawal of products from the market in case of need.

To consolidate these actions and ultimately provide a better service to the community, SENASA continues to strengthen its computerisation and communication processes, working on the continuous improvement of information systems in order to exert greater control through an auditable system. This allows the veterinary authorities to track the movement of food products at all stages and provides the product quality assurance that consumers demand. Argentina's identification and traceability systems conform with OIE and Codex Alimentarius standards, as well as bilateral and national requirements.

**Key Words:** Guarantee, Management control, Product quality, OIE standards

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