TATTOO 101

Identifying animals correctly should be a Shorthorn breeder's first responsibility when a calf is born. Proper identification ensures accurate parentage and production records. Permanent identification is required for registration with the American Shorthorn Association (ASA); this should be done by tattooing each animal with a unique herd number in at least one ear. An identification letter or initial may be used if also desired.

The Tattooing Rule

The requirements are set forth in Rule III, Application for Registry and Transfer.

Section 3. TATTOO IDENTIFICATION

1. REQUIREMENTS: No pedigree application received by the ASA shall be accepted unless the animal has an official identification number assigned in at least one ear. An identification letter or initial may be used if desired. No two animals of the same sex in the same herd shall be marked with identical tattoo numbers regardless of whether the mark is placed in the left ear of one and the right ear of the other. When using the International Year Code designation, the ASA recommends the code be placed after the identification number. The total number of characters in the tattoo identification (including year code) shall not exceed 8 characters.
2. RECORDING: Tattoo marks, as shown upon the application of registry of an animal, shall be recorded by the ASA and shall be written upon the registry certificates issued for such animal.
3. ILLEGILIBILTY: In the event an original tattoo mark of a registered animal is found to be unreadable, it shall be necessary to tattoo the same number again in the same ear; provided, however, if such action seems inadvisable the original number shall be marked in the opposite ear. In such event, the registry certificate must then be returned to the ASA for correction and for correction of the records.
4. VARIANCE: The registration of any animal found to be tattooed other than as shown on the registration certificate shall be null and void.
5. HERD PREFIXES: Breeders may incorporate a prefix of up to four characters (total of prefix, tattoo numbers and year code may not exceed 8 digits) for use when registering animals raised in their herd. Breeders can register their prefix with the ASA on the appropriate form. In the event that

two breeders choose to register the same prefix, preference will be given to the breeders who utilized the prefix first.

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

- The ASA does not provide a tattoo number for each animal it is up to each producer to devise their own identification system.
- Tattoos may not exceed 8 digits
- The International Year code designation is NOT required, if you choose to use the letter the ASA recommends placing the letter at the end of the identification number.

The ASA does not require a herd prefix to be used.

Animals may be tattooed in one or both ears. Left and Right are distinguished as the animal's left and right, so as you are standing behind the animal, looking the same direction as the animal, the left ear is on your left side and the right ear is on the right side.

- Two animals of the same sex and in the same herd may not have the same identification number regardless if the number is placed in opposite ears for each animal.
- In the event a tattoo is unreadable, tattoo the same number again in the same ear.

Getting Started

- Chute
- Halter
- Rubbing Alcohol
- Soft clean cloth
- Tattoo ink
- Tattoo kit

Step 1: Cleaning the Ear

Clean the ear using rubbing alcohol and a clean cloth. If wax isnâ€™t removed it will interfere with the ink penetrating the skin and cause the tattoo to fade over time. Hair can also interfere with a tattoo be sure to trim any hair that could possibly get in the way.

Step 2: Types of Ink

There are many brands of indelible ink available through farm supply stores. The roll-on applicators save ink and are cleaner, but some people have had issues with the ink fading over time because the ink was not rubbed in properly. Tattoo paste can be messier and requires a toothbrush or something similar to rub the ink in, but this step also ensures the ink will penetrate the needle holes.

Step 3: Applying Ink

This is optional before you tattoo the animal, but some breeders feel this ensures the ink goes into the skin as the tattoo is pressed into the ear. Apply ink over the area to be tattooed, usually in the middle rib of the ear. Cover an area slightly larger than the tattoo equipment with ink. Try avoiding the top and bottom ribs of the ear because they can become covered by hair at a later date.

Step 4: Tattooing

To avoid mistakes check the tattoo by punching the pliers into a piece of paper or cardboard. If using rotary tattoo pliers make sure the digits don't slip or move when tattooing. Get a secure hold on the calf. Position the tattoo pliers parallel in the middle rib of the calf's ear and squeeze firmly. Avoiding the ribs will prevent bleeding. Be sure to lift the pliers out straight, so the tattoo will not be scratched.

Step 5: Applying Ink

Apply ink and rub in firmly with a toothbrush or something similar. Rubbing the ink firmly into the ear ensures the ink has filled each of the holes in the ear this is vital for a lasting and legible tattoo.

Step 6: Sanitizing Equipment

Sanitize the pliers between calves by spraying rubbing alcohol on the pliers and the individual tattoo pieces. This should be done before and after each procedure.

Step 7: The Finished Product

After several weeks, the ink will dry and flake out of the ear, leaving a legible tattoo and a permanent means of identification. Check the tattoos on all cattle before you sell or exhibit them.