



The calves are starting to come now—by the time you receive this, sheds will be rapidly filling up. As the numbers build up, you need to identify who is who, which is when good ear-tagging practice becomes vital.



## Ear Tagging

While we were out disbudding calves last year, it came to our attention that quite a few calves had ear infections from tagging. These can best be avoided by following best practice at ear tagging time.

### 7 Easy Steps to Ear Tagging

**1: Restrain** calves adequately to ensure accurate tag position. Having another person to help makes the job much easier. While calves are sedated for disbudding is a perfect op-



**2: Identification System**  
Ensure you select the correct tag colour and mark the tag appropriately. Having an identification system in place is essential for good record keeping



**3: Location:**

The ear  
If placed too close to the base of the ear, this may disrupt blood flow and cause areas of the ear to die off.  
Alternatively if tags are placed too close to the tip of the ear, they may be easily ripped out.  
Distance from edge

**4: Use of applicator:**

Ensure your ear tag applicator is in good working order and that tag pieces align correctly. Having to pierce the ear twice, or re-tag the calf doubles the chances of a



**5: Clean the ear:**

Remove any dirt from the ear—don't put a tag through poos, saliva, stale milk, bedding etc stuck to the ear.

**6: Disinfect** the applicator between calves using an appropriate disinfectant  
E.g. Vetacide /meths/ iodine



**7: Infection:**

After tagging, monitor calves closely for signs of infection—pain, swelling or discharge. The tag should be removed immediately if this occurs. Some calves may require antibiotics and a surgery to remove diseased cartilage. Please contact us at Clutha Vets if you are concerned

Dairy NZ have launched a new “Calf Care Toolkit” - a very user friendly electronic survey on their website. It assesses various management

## Calf Care “Toolkit”



practices that you may employ on your farm. Depending on your answers, it suggests improvements you can make.

Check out <https://www.dairynz.co.nz/animal/calves/calf-care-toolkit/> to see how you are doing.