

Monitoring, Identification and Traceability

How are animals identified?

All calves born on the farm have to be tagged with 2 tags, one metal and one plastic, or 2 plastic. The plastic tag is called the primary tag, the metal one is the secondary tag. The primary tag must be readable from a distance. Ear tags are bought and those numbers are registered with BCMS (British Cattle Movement System). The numbers have been previously allocated to the farm and animals are tagged one after another as they are born.

Country	Farm number	Animal Number
UK	123456	1000023



After tagging a calf, an application is made via the Internet for a passport within 28 days. The passport arrives by post. It is like a small book of postcards and must be kept safely on the farm. If the calf is sold or moved anywhere the passport must accompany the animal and one of the removable postcards must be sent to BCMS where the movements will be recorded. The purchaser of the calf must send a further card to record the new keeper.

Pedigrees

A pedigree is yet another form of record. All freisian females born at Beechenhill are registered with the Holstein Society. A Pedigree Society keeps records of bulls used, and the family data of all the registered cattle. It also keeps records of the cow's yield and performance.

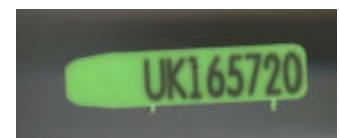
Having a Pedigree herd was important when farming conventionally; it was useful to be able to prove with records how good the animals were. In an organic system cows are not pushed to the same extent and the aim is for a long and healthy life for a cow rather than driving for a high yield, however the pedigree records still provide useful monitoring tools for the farmer.

The Pedigree Society keeps information gathered each month by National Milk Records (NMR) on every cow's yield, butterfat, and protein content. This is done by a milk recorder who come to an evening and morning milking once a month. The milk recorder records the yields and takes samples from every cow being milked. This information is analysed and held by NMR and used by the farmer and the pedigree society. Pedigree records can prove which family of cows have good traits. For any cows or calves sold, these pedigree records can increase the value. A pedigree record can also hold interesting historical information about a family of cows.

Sheep

All sheep movements on or off the farm and all births and deaths have to be recorded in a sheep movement book. Each farmer has a special identification mark, at Beechenhill the sheep are marked with a blue spot on the shoulder. Until January 2001 sheep did not have to be tagged, however now all lambs born must be tagged with a small plastic tag:

Country	Farm
UK	123456



More regulations may be introduced as a result of the 2001 foot and mouth outbreak

Organic Monitoring

To become an organic farm, having gone through a 2 year conversion period, a farm registers with a certification body. There are several UK certification bodies, The Soil Association (SA), Organic Farmers and Growers (OF&G) are two. Beechenhill is registered with the Soil Association. At least once every year organic farms are thoroughly inspected by their own certification body. Farms also have unexpected, spot inspections by their certification body or UK Register of Organic Foods Standards (UKROFS).

The inspection process is very rigorous. Organic farmers are required to keep detailed records of every action, purchase or treatment. Field records detail field work completed, number and types of animals grazing, any applications of manure or lime etc. Detailed records are kept of animal health treatments and vet visits. Animal feeds are recorded along with paperwork proving no contact with material containing genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Any product coming on to the farm has a traceable history to prove its wholesome origins. All of these detailed records must be made available to the inspectors. Any minor infringements have to be rectified by a certain date, any major infringements mean withdrawal of the organic certificate and produce would no longer be sold as organic.

