



Pilot Herd Case Study

Passion for agriculture and a genuine love for animals is how LaClare Farm came to be. Owned and operated by Larry and Clara Hedrich since 1978 in Chilton, Wis., the 22-acre farm has seen a variety of animals in its time. Stemming from Larry's background in swine, beef and sheep and Clara's dairy upbringing, along with the interest of their five children, the farm has had beef, sheep, swine, llamas and donkeys, most of these arriving as their children's 4-H projects. Today, LaClare Farm is primarily a dairy goat operation, home to 400 goats (250 milking), including Alpines, Saanens, Toggenburgs, LaManchas and Nubians. The farm also includes five donkeys and three llamas. Larry manages the farm while Clara teaches agriculture at West De Pere High School.

Premises Registration

The Hedrichs first learned about premises registration when Robert Fourdraine, Chief Operating Officer of the Wisconsin Livestock Identification

Consortium, presented information at one of the Wisconsin Dairy Goat Association meetings. Larry registered their premises online prior to the Premises Registration Act that took effect in 2006 and keeps their premises identification information current, as it can be used in conjunction with the federal scrapies program. Clara recalls needing their premises identification number when their children exhibited animals at the county and state fairs. In addition, the premises identification number is requested when they sell their dairy goats through Equity Cooperative Livestock Sales; however, with the exception of purchasing one or two bucks per year for breeding purposes, the Hedrichs maintain a mostly-closed herd.

Identification System

The Hedrichs' initial individual identification protocol included tail tattoos for the LaManchas and ear tattoos for all other kids within the first two weeks of birth. Upon kidding age, the goats were also identified with visible number tags on neck chains. Unfortunately, the Hedrichs experienced some challenges with this system. The goats, being the naturally curious animals they are, would nibble on the number tags and either chew on the tags until the numbers were illegible or until they fell off. The tail tattoos were also unreliable because the tattoo numbers can be difficult to read as the animals mature.

"The RFID tail implants solved our identification challenges," said Larry.

"Identifying 400 curious goats in not easy. The RFID tail implants solved our identification challenges."

*– Larry Hedrich
LaClare Farm
Owner/Operator*



Top 3 advantages of current system

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| 1. Time savings |
| 2. Accuracy |
| 3. Secure identification |

Now, in addition to the tail tattoos and visible number tags, the Hedrichs also insert RFID tail implants into all kids, which they read with an RFID wand.

Through the pilot herd program, the Hedrichs received their first batch of RFID tail implants and RFID wand from WLIC. Not only does this technology provide a secure form of identification that can withstand their goats' curiosity, but the Hedrichs are continually finding opportunities to incorporate the technology into managing their herd.

The Hedrichs test milk on a regular basis, and the AgSource dairy herd improvement (DHI) technician brings her own RFID equipment to identify the goats and record milk data. The veterinarian conducts monthly herd health checks, in which they ultrasound does for pregnancies. Having the RFID wand to read the implants helps to identify each animal quickly, saving time when sorting individuals from the herd for ultrasounding. Although the tail implants and RFID reader help identify the goats, the Hedrichs are working on a system to upload the corresponding identification numbers to a spreadsheet and synchronize their herd data.

Values Gained

- **Accurate and secure identification** – The RFID tail implants provided the Hedrichs with a method of identification that can withstand the curiosity of their goats and positively identify each animal. The Hedrichs continue to use visible identification, but feel confident knowing that the tail implants are there to help identify the goats.
- **Time Savings** – The RFID tail implants and reader help

milk testing and herd health checks run more efficiently. Now they simply use the reader to identify each goat and administer health needs. During milk testing, the DHI technician simply walks down the line of goats in the parlor with the reader to identify each one and record milk test data. For the Hedrichs, RFID technology means less time wasted on trying to figure out who is who in their goat herd.

- **Accuracy** – In addition to the time savings benefit, the Hedrichs also appreciate the accuracy of their system. Since they insert the tail implants as kids, there is no change in identification number and the Hedrichs rely

on the accuracy and consistency of these numbers to keep records of breeding, pregnancies, and other herd health tasks throughout each goat's lifetime.



Future Outlook

The Hedrichs believe premises registration is a vital step toward tracing the origin and current existence of livestock in case of a disease outbreak. They encourage their peers to register and maintain their premises identification because, according to Larry, "You just don't know when you're going to need it."

Although the Hedrichs maintain a mostly-closed herd, they do purchase one or two bucks for their herd every year. "I'm fairly selective when it comes to choosing bucks to introduce into my herd," said Larry, "but the concern is always in the back of my mind 'what potential health issues am I bringing into my herd?'"

The Hedrichs also appreciate the simplicity and efficiency of implementing the RFID tail implants and reader, and recommend that other dairy goat producers consider the benefits of RFID technology.

