



UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
EXTENSION

Tattoo Application in Beef Cattle

Deron Rehberg, Area Livestock Agent/ County Extension Coordinator

Carole Knight, Extension Specialist, 4-H Animal Science Programs

Heather Shultz, 4-H Program Coordinator - Livestock

Jason Duggin, Public Service Associate

Pedro Fontes, Associate Professor

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Livestock shows and purebred sales often require an ear tattoo as a form of permanent identification. If the rules of your next event require a tattoo, it is imperative for it to be accurate and easily read. Mistakes or improper application of tattoos can be very frustrating situations for everyone involved. Illegible, infected or incorrect digits are unfortunately common.

Following a few key steps can help improve the effectiveness of tattoo application and the ease with which they can be read. So, let's make sure that it is done right the first time. Please remember also to check your tattoos often. Let's get started.

Here are some of the key tools necessary for properly applying a permanent tattoo:

- A tattoo kit, complete with tattoo pliers and tattoo letters and numbers for a single application.
- Also, you'll need tattoo ink for application before and after using the pliers.
- Another overlooked tool is the use of paper towels or cloth used for cleaning the ear.
- It's also very convenient and helpful to have thick paper or cardboard for testing the placement of the digits in the tattoo pliers.
- You're going to need a well-built, sturdy chute for safety.
- Also, it may be helpful for some to have a halter to fully restrain the head of the heifer or steer,
- and finally, you'll need some rubbing alcohol to sanitize the pliers (and digits).

Before we get started, remember that safety is definitely first. Once the tools and materials are in place, cleaned and functional, make sure that the restraining chute is set up for the size of the cattle being processed and that everyone involved can process the cattle safely. Use a well-built cattle chute that will properly restrain the animal without flipping over. It is not recommended to use a fitting chute you would take to shows. Now with everything in place and everything being safe, let's get started.

Once the animal is properly restrained, clean the ear using paper towels. You are you going to probably need to clean the ear two or three times very well depending on how dirty it may be. Cleaning the ear is very important to keep it from getting infected.

It's exceptionally important to make sure you have the records correct and that you get the right digits in the right place, and then double check it with that cardboard or thick paper. Apply some ink in that well-cleaned area above the top rib, making sure to stay out of the hairline for the actual tattoo. When you get those pliers in the correct position, apply good firm steady hold for a couple of seconds, if possible, then evaluate the tattoo for accuracy and correctness once again. Then you're going to want to apply ink again either as shown here or with an old

toothbrush, and finally make sure you sanitize those pliers and the digits to keep infection and warts from developing right in the middle of your tattoo.

If you use these simple keys for applying a tattoo and remember to check them often for legibility and accuracy with your records, check-in at the next show or sale can be much less stressful. When the tattoo is correct and registration is over, it's show time.

Thanks for watching and good luck down the road. Also, we want to make sure and thank the Northwest Georgia Research and Education Center for providing the animals and the facilities for this footage.