



APPLICATION OF BRASS IAR EAR TAGS

Many thousands of Australian alpaca now sport IAR tags and their breeders report no troubles, however recent postings on the AAA Inc. Discussion Forum are yielding the odd occasion when breeders have run into some trouble. To assist breeders who are new to the industry or those who have got into a spot of bother, following are step by step instructions and handy hints for the application of the brass ear tags.

At what age do you tag animals?

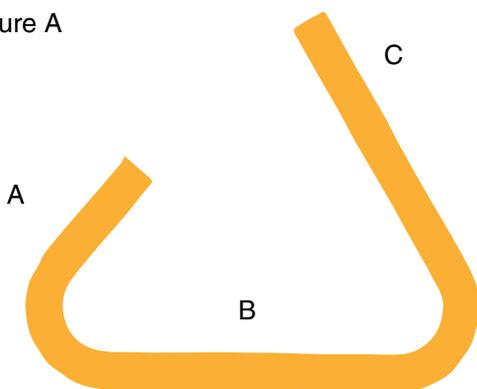
I recommend the IAR brass tag only be applied to animals 6 months of age or over. The problem with applying the tags to younger animals is that the ear is narrower and there is a far higher chance of piercing blood vessels; thus leading to infection and future problems. At 6 months (coincidentally, general weaning age) the alpaca's ear is of sufficient size to reduce that possibility.

The tag (Figure A)

The IAR brass ear tags provided by AAA have three sides.

- SIDE A is the shortest and is the side that pierces the ear cartilage when the applicator pliers are squeezed shut.
- SIDE B is the longest and has the letter IAR embossed in the middle of the outside. (This is the side that should end up on the **outside** 'hairy side' of the ear.)
- SIDE C has the individual ear tag number embossed on its outside. (This is the side that should end up on the **inside** 'smooth side' of the year.)

Figure A



Editor's note:

These descriptions have been written based on the IAR ear tags that bear five (5) digits only.

The ear tags currently being issued by AAA now have six (6) digits. The first two digits of the ear tag number are embossed on SIDE B (i.e. the side that also has IAR embossed on it); the remaining four digits appear on SIDE C. When the ear tag is closed the numbers should appear consecutively.

This fact does not alter the ear tag application process.

Won't having the ear tag number (SIDE C) on the inside of the ear make it hard to read?

Yes it will, however if you insert the current model of the IAR tag leaving the number on the outside of the ear (where it's easily read), the ends of the tag that overlap each other when the tag is clamped shut will also be on the outside of the ear. This makes for a very effective way of trapping the tag in wire when the alpaca puts his/her head through the fence. The alpaca is subsequently caught in the fence until either you release it, or the animal tears its tag out of its ear! By inserting the current model of IAR tag with the number on the inside of the ear, there is only the smooth side (SIDE B) to slide past the wire.

The applicator

Unlike many other identification tags, the AAA ear tags are designed to be self-piercing and to be used with an applicator called a 'One Shot Applicator', made by Allflex Ltd. and which are also available from AAA.



Which ear for which sex?

- For female alpaca, the tag is inserted on the outside edge of their RIGHT (starboard or off side) ear.
- For male alpaca, the tag is inserted on the outside edge of their LEFT (port or near side) ear.

In moments of indecision simply remember that, "the lady is always right!!!"



Steps for applying ear tag

1. Disinfection

Methylated spirits, Betadine, Chlorhexidine, or any skin disinfectant would be satisfactory.

Armed with a cotton wool ball soaked in the disinfectant of your choice; rub both the inside and outside of the ear to remove any scurf, loose hair and bacteria.

Some people report shaving a small area of excessively hairy ears and also soaking the IAR tag in disinfectant prior to application. This is all fine, as long as the ear is rubbed with the soaked cotton wool before applying the tag as this is far more effective than spray.

Disinfection is very important, as infected cartilage is almost impossible to cure without surgery which may result in removal of part or all, of the ear. Should infection set in or a discharge occur, it would be advisable to cut the tag with side-cutting pliers and remove it. In the presence of infection, the ear tag is just another foreign body and may delay healing. In any event, prevention is better - and cheaper - than cure!

2. Loading the applicator

On both sides of one jaw of the applicator is a raised symbol indicating the correct way for the tag to be loaded into the applicator (figure B). A handy hint is to use some white paint or liquid paper on this applicator jaw.

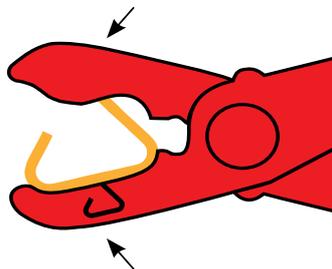


Figure B

When you are applying the tag, it is the jaw with the raised symbol (white paint) that will be on the OUTSIDE 'hairy side' of the ear.

3. Where to stand when applying the ear tag

Being right-handed, I find it easier to stand behind the head of the female on her right side. When applying the tag to males, it is easier to stand on their left side and in front of their head. (Left-handed folk might like to reverse their stance).

Remember to keep the raised symbol / white painted side of the applicator jaw on the outside 'hairy side' of the ear.

4. Applying the ear tag

How far up/down the ear?

Place the applicator halfway between the tip and the base of the outer edge of the ear (when the ear is facing forward).

How far onto the ear? (Figure C)

In the curve of the tag between SIDES B & C, allow approximately 1-2mm from the edge of the ear to that curve.

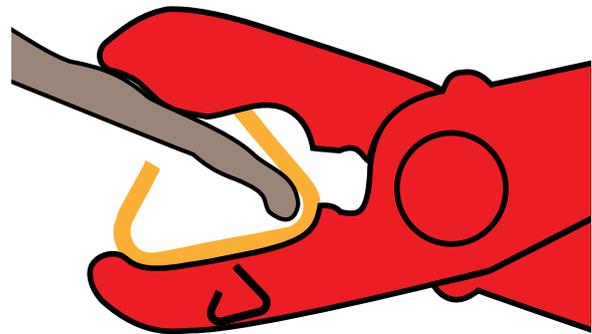
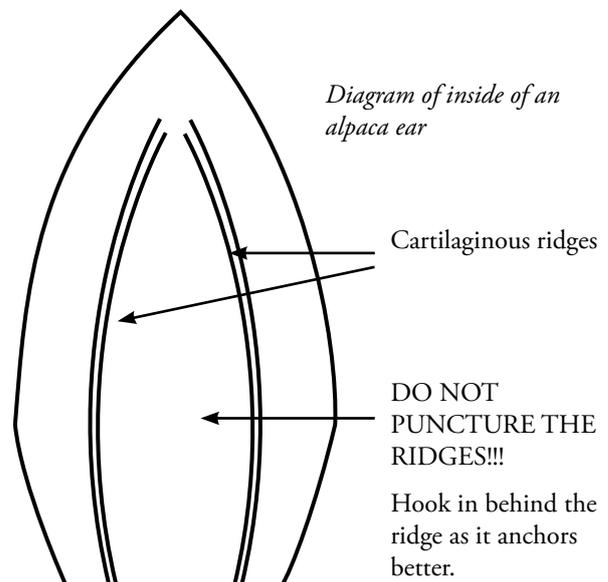


Figure C

Why? If you push too far onto the ear the resulting pressure of the tag on the ear cartilage may cause irritation or inflammation; if you leave too much of the tag protruding past the edge of the ear, it will leave space for long grass, twigs or ends of wire to get caught. One exception is if you plan to attach a plastic ID tag to the brass one where this may require you to leave approximately half the tag protruding past the ear margin.



Application

Having located the desired area, apply the tag with one firm squeeze of the applicator if possible. If you have to use two squeezes, make sure that the applicator has not slipped (even slightly) on the tag.

The design of the applicator ensures that when the tag has been applied properly there is no pressure on the enclosed section of the ear. If the applicator slips on the tag and the second squeeze is on the middle of the tag, the resulting pressure on the enclosed ear will cause continuous pain and may lead to infection.