



ONTARIO PORK

# ONTARIO PORK FACTSHEET

## TATTOOING YOUR MARKET HOGS

### WHY TATTOOS?

As part of the national PigTrace Canada traceability program, all Ontario tattoos must end in either a 5 or a 7 and be linked to the registered premises from which the hog was marketed. Tattoo numbers are issued by Ontario Pork and linked to premises. A shoulder slap tattoo is a method to properly identify hogs sent to slaughter under the PigTrace program. Tattoo numbers are not portable, they are always linked to the premise they are initially linked to. If you move to another property, there may be an existing tattoo or you may have to register a new one. The system will protect our export-dependent market and provide assistance to a rapid response in the event of a food safety concern or foreign animal disease. A clearly identifiable tattoo at grading is the only way you can receive prompt, correct payment for your market hogs and is key to traceability.

### PLUGGED TATTOOS

Unclear tattoos result in a 'plugged' hog.

The tattoo reading station will record unclear numbers with an asterisk (\*). Incorrect readings may be caused by:

- Tattoos on the wrong side.
- Poor tattoo placement.
- Broken or missing tattoo digits.
- Not enough ink.

Example:

If the tattoo number is 58365 but the 3 is unreadable, it will be recorded as 58\*65.

What Happens to a 'Plugged' Hog?

'Plugged' tattoos are electronically matched up with the closest tattoos at the plant for that day.

Plugged tattoos will be shown on your producer statement.

### PREVENTING PLUGGED TATTOOS

Using proper equipment and techniques will reduce 'plugged' hogs. It is important to choose the best hammer for you.

#### Lever Lock Slapper/Stainless Steel Slapper

- Best choice for producers.
- All five characters are stationary.
- Ideal for one location or load.
- Less chance of error.



#### Rotary Slapper

- Two rolling digits and three fixed digits.
- Ideal for multiple tattoo numbers or different locations.
- Caution – be sure the proper numbers are applied.



For even ink applications on your hammer, use an inking brush pad or a neoprene inking box.

### Getting Started

Hammers and tattoo digits can be sourced from most farm supply stores. Make sure the characters you buy are compatible with your hammer and use hog shoulder marking ink from your farm supply store.

## Tattoo Placement

Place the tattoo on the left side of the hog behind the shoulder at mid-point. This area is flat.

Tattoos can expand when the carcass is hung, so it may make them harder to read.

## **TATTOOING TIPS AND TECHNIQUES**

- Tattoo hogs at the farm
- Purchase your own five-digit slapper.
- Tattoo within 24 hours of shipping to ensure tattoo legibility.
- Use only the five-character number(s) assigned to your premises.
- Your tattoo is your signature of ownership and quality.
- All Ontario tattoos will end in either a 5 or a 7.
- If done by an assembly yard or trucker, have them use your hammer.
- Remember, your assembler represents *you*.
- Never tattoo on the mid-side or top of the hog – reduced carcass quality or bruise damage will result.



## Before Tattooing

- Check tattoo characters.
- Do a 'test' tattoo to check for bent or broken needles.
- Discard any character with missing or loose needles.
- Check the number sequence.

## After Tattooing

- Clean clogged characters with a wire brush.
- Hard buildup can be soaked in isopropyl alcohol (rubbing alcohol).
- Store characters in a suitable container (i.e., plastic lunch pail) to prevent damage.
- Needles dull over time.
- Follow a regular replacement routine with tattoo characters.
- Have a second set of new tattoo characters on hand.
- It's best to replace the entire set when they no longer feel sharp.
- This is a low cost way to ensure your tattoo is readable.

## While Tattooing

- Re-ink characters after each hog.
- Generously cover the inking brush or pad.
- Do not dilute ink.
- Clean clogged characters with a wire brush.
- Do not tattoo hogs on the run.
- Use an enclosed "squeeze" (i.e., small pen or narrow alley).
- Tattoo behind the shoulder.
- If you make a mistake, re-do the tattoo once but at a distance from the first tattoo.
- Do not try to hit the same area twice.

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Remember that the tattoo will be upside down from what you see when looking at the tattoo hammer facing the pins. Check by tattooing a piece of cardboard first.

## **TATTOOING WITH YOUR RIGHT HAND**

- One at a time, each hog should pass to your right and from behind.
- The tattoo hammer should be parallel to the ground.
- Swing your arm, shoulder and hips simultaneously.
- When you are at the top of your swing, lean your weight to your left. Position your right shoulder under your chin. Gaze at the spot you intend to tattoo.
- When the hog's snout is aligned with your right knee, start your swing down.
- Using your left arm as a counterbalance, transfer your weight to your right side, keeping your right hand straight.
- As your hammer slaps the pig's hide, bend your wrist at the point you wish to tattoo.

Remember to fill in your hog receipt/ trucker receipt with the correct tattoo number. The tattoo number on the hogs must be the same as the paperwork sent with the animals.

