



Bio Vet Innovator Magazine

(Fueling The Future of Science...)

Volume 3 (Issue 6) JUNE 2026

OPEN ACCESS

World Environment Day – 05th June 2026

Popular Article

The Future of Livestock Identification in India

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20577406>

Received: June 02, 2026

Published: June 07, 2026

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Abstract:

Biometric tagging is revolutionizing livestock identification and management by providing accurate, reliable and real-time monitoring of animals. Unlike conventional identification methods such as ear tagging, branding and tattooing, biometric technologies utilize unique biological characteristics including muzzle patterns, facial features, iris characteristics and RFID-linked profiles for permanent animal identification. These technologies facilitate disease surveillance, health monitoring, breeding management, traceability and data-driven decision-making in livestock farming. Various biometric tools such as muzzle print recognition, RFID microchips and artificial intelligence-based facial recognition systems are being increasingly adopted across different livestock species including cattle, buffaloes, sheep, goats, pigs, and poultry. In India, government initiatives such as the National Digital Livestock Mission and e-Gopala, along with the growing availability of affordable digital technologies, have enhanced the feasibility of biometric tagging. This article provides an overview of biometric identification systems used in different livestock species, highlighting their applications, implementation methods, and potential benefits in enhancing livestock management, animal welfare, productivity and traceability.

Keywords: Biometric tagging, Livestock identification, RFID, Animal traceability, Digital livestock management, Artificial intelligence.

Introduction:

Biometric tagging is emerging as an innovative tool in livestock management, enabling accurate animal identification and efficient monitoring through advanced digital technologies (Khan et al., 2025). In India, where livestock contribute significantly to rural livelihoods, conventional identification methods such as ear tagging, branding and tattooing often face challenges related to durability and accuracy

(Wathes et al., 2016). By utilizing distinctive biological traits such as muzzle patterns, iris characteristics and facial features, biometric systems provide a reliable and permanent approach for animal identification, traceability and herd management (Khan et al., 2025).

What Are Biometric Tags?

Biometric tags are advanced electronic devices used in livestock farming to collect and transmit real-time information about animals, supporting precision livestock management and health monitoring (Khan et al., 2025). These devices can continuously record physiological parameters such as body temperature, heart rate and respiratory rate, enabling early detection of health problems (Neethirajan, 2020). In addition, biometric systems often incorporate GPS technology to track animal movement and location, helping farmers manage grazing and prevent animal loss (Khan et al., 2025). They can also monitor behavioral activities, including walking patterns, feeding behavior and resting periods, which provide valuable insights into animal welfare and productivity (Neethirajan, 2020). Furthermore, biometric identification methods based on unique traits such as facial features, muzzle patterns or RFID-linked profiles ensure accurate and reliable animal identification throughout their lifespan (Khan et al., 2025).

Benefits of Biometric Tags:

- 1. Early Disease Detection:** Biometric tags continuously monitor physiological parameters, enabling early identification of health issues and timely intervention (Neethirajan, 2020).
- 2. Improved Feed Management:** Monitoring feeding and grazing behavior helps optimize feed utilization and reduce wastage (Neethirajan, 2020).
- 3. Enhanced Breeding Efficiency:** Tracking reproductive activities and estrus cycles supports better breeding management and improves reproductive performance (Khan et al., 2025).
- 4. Data-Driven Farm Management:** Real-time data collected from animals assists farmers in making informed decisions regarding herd health and productivity (Neethirajan, 2020).
- 5. Better Traceability and Biosecurity:** Accurate animal identification and movement tracking strengthen disease surveillance, traceability and farm biosecurity measures (Wathes et al., 2016).

Muzzle Print Recognition:

Muzzle print recognition is a promising biometric technique for livestock identification. Similar to human fingerprints, the muzzle pattern of each animal is unique and remains unchanged throughout its life, making it a reliable identification tool (Khan et al., 2025). This method is non-invasive, tamper-resistant and cost-effective, as it does not require physical tags or implants and can be implemented using smartphones and AI-based software (Awad & Hassaballah, 2021). Deep learning technologies can analyze muzzle images with high accuracy, improving livestock traceability and management (Khan et al., 2025).

RFID Microchips:

RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology remains one of the most widely adopted systems for livestock identification and traceability. RFID tags, which can be attached as ear tags or implanted as microchips, store unique identification numbers linked to an animal's health, breeding and movement records (Wathes et al., 2016). These tags can be read quickly using handheld or automated scanners, enabling efficient herd management and data collection on commercial farms (Neethirajan, 2020). In India, ICAR-compliant RFID systems are increasingly being used in dairy cooperatives and livestock enterprises to improve animal tracking and record management (ICAR, 2022).

AI-Based Facial Recognition:

Artificial intelligence-based facial recognition is emerging as an advanced method for livestock identification. Using deep learning models such as convolutional neural networks (CNNs), animals can be recognized through their unique facial characteristics with high accuracy (Khan et al., 2025). Studies have reported identification accuracies of over 99% under controlled conditions, highlighting the potential of this technology for reliable animal recognition (Awad & Hassaballah, 2021). When integrated with IoT devices, facial recognition systems can also support real-time monitoring of animal health, behavior and welfare in modern livestock production systems (Neethirajan, 2020).

Implementation of Biometric Tagging in Livestock:

- 1. Select Appropriate Biometric Devices:** Farmers should choose suitable technologies such as sensor-based ear tags, wearable collars, RFID microchips or biosensor-enabled devices according to their management objectives and farm conditions (Neethirajan, 2020).
- 2. Integrate With Digital Management Systems:** Biometric devices should be connected to farm management software that provides data storage, real-time monitoring, analytics and automated alerts for effective decision-making (Khan et al., 2025).
- 3. Train Farm Personnel:** Proper training is essential to ensure correct device usage, data interpretation and timely response to health or behavioral changes detected by the system (Neethirajan, 2020).
- 4. Regularly Monitor Collected Data:** Continuous evaluation of health records, movement patterns and productivity indicators helps identify issues early and improve herd management practices (Khan et al., 2025).
- 5. Optimize Farm Management Practices:** Insights obtained from biometric data can be used to refine feeding programs, improve disease control measures and enhance overall livestock productivity and welfare (Neethirajan, 2020).

Viability and Feasibility of Biometric Tagging in India:

India possesses immense potential for the adoption of biometric livestock identification

technologies due to its vast livestock population and increasing focus on digital agriculture. Government initiatives such as the National Digital Livestock Mission and e-Gopala are encouraging the use of digital tools for animal health monitoring, traceability and farm management (Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying, 2022). The implementation of biometric tagging is becoming increasingly feasible as affordable RFID and sensor-based identification systems are now available for livestock farmers. The expansion of mobile connectivity, cloud-based data platforms, and digital veterinary services in rural areas further supports the integration of these technologies into everyday farming practices (NDDDB, 2023). Biometric tagging offers significant advantages by enabling accurate animal identification, efficient health record management, disease surveillance, vaccination tracking, and breeding monitoring. These benefits contribute to improved productivity, better animal welfare, and enhanced traceability across the livestock value chain (Neethirajan, 2020). With continued government support, farmer awareness programs, and participation from agri-tech companies, biometric identification systems have the potential to become an integral component of modern livestock management in India (Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying, 2022).

Biometric Identification in Cattle and Buffaloes:

Cattle and buffaloes are among the primary beneficiaries of biometric identification technologies in India. Commonly used systems include RFID ear tags, which store unique identification numbers linked to animal health, breeding and movement records, as well as injectable microchips that provide permanent identification throughout an animal's lifetime (Wathes et al., 2016). Recent advancements in artificial intelligence have also enabled the use of facial and muzzle recognition technologies, allowing animals to be identified based on their unique biological characteristics without the need for physical tags (Khan et al., 2025). Several organizations in India, including ID Tech Solutions, Allflex Livestock Intelligence and Interra Cognita, provide livestock identification solutions that support traceability and herd management programs. Research has further demonstrated the potential of multi-biometric systems combining facial and muzzle features, achieving identification accuracies of approximately 90% in cattle under field conditions (Khan et al., 2025).

Biometric Identification in Sheep and Goats:

Biometric identification technologies are increasingly being adopted for sheep and goats to improve herd management, disease control, and traceability. Common identification tools include lightweight RFID ear tags and QR code-based tags, which enable farmers to maintain accurate records of animal health, vaccination schedules, breeding performance and movement history (Wathes et al., 2016). These systems are particularly suitable for small ruminants because they are durable, easy to apply, and capable of functioning under diverse environmental conditions. In India, companies such as Kshama Surgical Pvt. Ltd., BSD InfoTech, and Allflex India provide identification solutions specifically designed for sheep and goats.

The adoption of these technologies has contributed to better flock management, improved disease monitoring, enhanced productivity, and more efficient livestock traceability programs (Neethirajan, 2020).

Biometric Identification in Pigs and Poultry:

Biometric and RFID-based identification technologies are increasingly being utilized in pig and poultry production systems to improve animal monitoring, productivity, and traceability. Common tools include RFID ear tags and injectable microchips in pigs, as well as RFID leg bands and wing tags in poultry, which facilitate the recording of health, breeding, growth and production data (Neethirajan, 2020). These technologies enable farmers to monitor animal performance more efficiently, optimize feed management, and enhance disease surveillance. In India, companies such as Cryobiotech and ID Tech Solutions provide RFID-based identification systems tailored for pig and poultry enterprises. The adoption of these technologies has been associated with improved farm management, greater production efficiency, and enhanced livestock record-keeping in commercial farming operations (Khan et al., 2025).

Challenges and Opportunities in Biometric Tagging:

- 1. High Initial Cost:** The adoption of biometric tagging systems can be expensive for small and marginal farmers; however, government subsidies, livestock development programs, and cooperative-based models can help reduce financial barriers (Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying, 2022).
- 2. Limited Connectivity in Rural Areas:** Poor internet access may hinder real-time data transmission, but the use of offline synchronization features and GSM-enabled devices can improve functionality in remote regions (NDDB, 2023).
- 3. Lack of Technical Knowledge:** Many farmers require training to effectively use biometric technologies. Capacity-building programs conducted by government agencies, NGOs, and agri-tech organizations can enhance adoption and utilization (Neethirajan, 2020).
- 4. Complex Data Management:** The large volume of data generated by biometric systems can be difficult to interpret. User-friendly dashboards and simplified analytics platforms can help farmers make informed decisions more easily (Khan et al., 2025).

Species-Specific Biometric Identification Solutions for Livestock:

Species	Suitable Biometric Identification Method	Key Advantages
Cattle and Buffaloes	Muzzle recognition, RFID ear tags, Facial recognition systems	Provides accurate identification, traceability, and health monitoring for high-value animals
Sheep and Goats	RFID ear tags, QR code-based ear tags	Lightweight, durable, and suitable for effective flock management and vaccination tracking
Pigs	RFID ear tags, Injectable microchips	Facilitates breeding record maintenance, growth monitoring, and disease surveillance

Poultry	RFID leg bands, Wing tags	Supports automated production monitoring, breeding management, and flock traceability
Camels and Horses	RFID microchips, Visual identification tags	Enables reliable identification, breeding management, ownership verification, and movement tracking

Summary:

The livestock sector is increasingly embracing digital technologies to improve animal management and farm efficiency. Biometric tagging has emerged as a modern identification approach that utilizes unique biological characteristics and electronic devices to recognize and monitor animals throughout their lifetime. Technologies such as RFID tags, muzzle print recognition and artificial intelligence-based facial recognition provide accurate identification while supporting health monitoring, breeding management and traceability. The application of biometric systems across different livestock species offers opportunities for early disease detection, improved productivity, better record keeping and enhanced biosecurity. In India, the growing emphasis on livestock digitization, coupled with supportive government initiatives and technological innovations, is creating a favorable environment for the adoption of these systems. Although challenges related to affordability, connectivity, and technical awareness remain, continued advancements in digital agriculture are expected to make biometric tagging more accessible to farmers. As a result, biometric identification is likely to play a crucial role in transforming livestock farming into a more efficient, sustainable and data-driven enterprise in the future.

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