



NATIONAL ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM

Background

The growing number of animal disease outbreaks around the world, the threat of intentional introductions of foreign animal diseases, and the detections of bovine spongiform encephalopathy in the United States have led to the development of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). The initiative to develop NAIS was started several years ago by Federal, State, and livestock and poultry industry partners.

NAIS will allow State and Federal animal health officials to quickly identify livestock and poultry that may have been exposed to a disease of concern. The premises registration system and the system to administer animal identification numbers will be maintained by USDA and the States. Animal tracking databases that maintain the movement records of animals will be managed by the industry and the States. The system is being designed to identify within 48 hours all premises and animals that have had direct contact with an animal disease of concern. This system will help to ensure rapid disease containment and maximum protection of U.S. animal health.

USDA has provided information and sought industry and public input through a series of listening sessions and other methods. Producers' concerns include NAIS information confidentiality; potential mandatory participation; and funding options and costs.

In fiscal year (FY) 2005, more than \$26 million was obligated for animal identification number activities. At the end of 2005, a total of 50 States, 5 Tribes, and 2 U.S. Territories were capable of registering premises according to USDA standards, and USDA had assigned a nationally unique premises ID number to more than 168,000 locations. USDA is also preparing to begin allocating animal identification numbers (AINs) in the near future. The end goal of actually tracking animals under the NAIS will become possible after premises and animals are identified in a uniform manner and the data collection infrastructure is put into place. The FY 2006 Agriculture Appropriations Act includes more than \$33 million for NAIS. Continued Federal-State-industry cooperation is critical to the development and implementation of a successful NAIS.

On August 30, 2005, USDA announced guiding principles for the development of a NAIS public-private partnership that would enable the private sector to maintain animal movement data. The system will ensure that animal health authorities have ready access to NAIS information in the event of a disease issue. All components of the system will be available to producers in 2007.

General Opinions Expressed

- Most respondents were in favor of an animal identification system, but do not want to be burdened with the costs.
- Of the respondents who are in favor of an animal identification system, most would prefer a mandatory, publicly funded system with full Government control of the tracking database.
- Additionally, some respondents think the Farm Service Agency is the appropriate agency to deliver the program.
- With regard to the respondents who favor an animal identification system but prefer a privately held database, their reasons stem from cost and confidentiality concerns. These respondents prefer that only disease surveillance information be held publicly and that production data information be held in a private industry system. They contend that industry has the resources and initiative and can design, build, and manage the system.

Detailed Suggestions Expressed

- Dairy farmers supported USDA's 5-year plan for a mandatory system. The system must be effective and win the public trust in the event of a crisis.
- The Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska supported utilizing individual animal ID as a means to help implement the country of origin labeling (COOL) efforts, if the ID program becomes mandatory.
- Premise registration is currently voluntary, but should become mandatory.
- Tracking the movement of livestock such as poultry, sheep and goats, and horses is important but more difficult than tracking cattle. Privatization is not currently feasible. The Federal Government needs to help solve this problem.
- Keep animal identification information within the States and not Washington, DC. Commenter mentioned his support for a premise ID program in Alabama.
- The national animal identification system should use the current scrapie system. It is efficient, does not cost much, and is effective. Commenter suggested a cost/benefit analysis of NAIS. The cost of the NAIS is the overriding issue for the U.S. sheep industry, and cannot be completely borne by the producer. One-size-fits-all does not work—a cattle animal unit costs \$8, but a sheep animal unit costs \$48.
- Concern was expressed that the NAIS will lead to traceback to U.S. farms if contamination is caused by foreign products.