

Notices

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This section of the FEDERAL REGISTER contains documents other than rules or proposed rules that are applicable to the public. Notices of hearings and investigations, committee meetings, agency decisions and rulings, delegations of authority, filing of petitions and applications and agency statements of organization and functions are examples of documents appearing in this section.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Submission for OMB Review; Comment Request

December 13, 2007.

The Department of Agriculture has submitted the following information collection requirement(s) to OMB for review and clearance under the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104-13. Comments regarding (a) whether the collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of burden including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility and clarity of the information to be collected; (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology should be addressed to: Desk Officer for Agriculture, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), OIRA_Submission@OMB.EOP.GOV or fax (202) 395-5806 and to Departmental Clearance Office, USDA, OCIO, Mail Stop 7602, Washington, DC 20250-7602. Comments regarding these information collections are best assured of having their full effect if received within 30 days of this notification. Copies of the submission(s) may be obtained by calling (202) 720-8958.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor a collection of information unless the collection of information displays a currently valid OMB control number and the agency informs potential persons who are to respond to the collection of information that such persons are not required to respond to

the collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

Title: Stakeholder/Customer Satisfaction Survey.

OMB Control Number: 0579-NEW.

Summary of Collection: In 2003, the Plant Health Program (PHP) unit, Plant Protection and Quarantine, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), obtained from the International Organization of Standardization (ISO, nongovernmental worldwide network of national standards institutes) certification in the ISO 9001:2000 standard for its permit services. To meet the ISO 9001:2000 standards, an organization must demonstrate its ability to consistently provide a product that meets customer quality requirements and applicable regulatory requirements, while aiming to enhance customer satisfaction through effective application of the system, including processes for continual improvement of its performance. In order to remain in compliance with Clause 8.2.1 (Customer Satisfaction) of the ISO 9001:2000 standard, PHP must measure the performance of its quality management system by monitoring information related to customer perception in relationship to customer requirements. PHP has determined that the best method for obtaining this information is through the use of stakeholder/customer satisfaction surveys.

Need and Use of the Information: PHP will collect information from the survey to solicit stakeholder and customer feedback with regards to their satisfaction with the regulatory services of Permit Services, Pest Permit Evaluations, and National Identification Services, which is a compliance requirement of the ISO 9001:2000 standard. Without the information it would seriously affect APHIS' ability to remain in compliance with the ISO 9001:2000 international standards.

Description of Respondents: Business or other for-profit; Individuals or households; Federal Government

Number of Respondents: 500.

Frequency of Responses: Reporting; On occasion.

Total Burden Hours: 80.

Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service

Title: Update of the Nursery Stock Regulations.

OMB Control Number: 0579-0190.

Summary of Collection: Under the Plant Protection Act (PPA) (7 U.S.C. 7701-7772), the Secretary of Agriculture is authorized to prohibit or restrict the importation, entry, exportation, or movement in interstate commerce of plant pests and other articles, to prevent the introduction of plant pests into the United States. Regulations authorized by the PPA concerning the importation of nursery stock, plants, roots, bulbs, seeds, and other plant products are contained in Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations, "Nursery Stock," 319.37 through 319.34-14. Implementing the nursery stock regulations requires APHIS to collect information from a variety of individuals who are involved in growing, exporting, and importing nursery stock.

Need and Use of the Information: APHIS will collect information to ensure that plant pests are not introduced into the United States. The information APHIS collects serves as the supporting documentation needed to issue required PPQ forms and documents that allow importation of nursery stock.

Description of Respondents: Business or other for-profit.

Number of Respondents: 30.

Frequency of Responses: Reporting; On occasion.

Total Burden Hours: 75.

Ruth Brown,

Departmental Information Collection Clearance Officer.

[FR Doc. E7-24548 Filed 12-18-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS-2007-0148]

A Business Plan To Advance Animal Disease Traceability

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability and request for comments.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that we are making available for review and comment a Business Plan to Advance Animal Disease Traceability. The Business Plan details recommended strategies and actions to enable existing State and Federal regulated and voluntary animal health programs, industry-administered management and marketing programs, and various animal identification methods to work in harmony with the National Animal Identification System.

ADDRESSES: The Business Plan is available on the Internet at <http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/>. The document may also be viewed in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 690-2817 before coming.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Mr. Neil Hammerschmidt, Coordinator, National Animal Identification System, National Center for Animal Health Programs, VS, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 200, Riverdale, MD 20737-1231; (301) 734-5571.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

As part of its ongoing efforts to safeguard animal health, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) initiated implementation of a National Animal Identification System (NAIS) in 2004. The NAIS is a cooperative State-Federal-industry program administered by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). The purpose of the NAIS is to provide a streamlined information system that will help producers and animal health officials respond quickly and effectively to animal disease events in the United States.

The ultimate long-term goal of the NAIS is to provide State and Federal officials with the capability to identify all animals and premises that have had direct contact with a disease of concern within 48 hours after discovery. Meeting that goal requires a comprehensive animal-disease traceability infrastructure. We have therefore developed a Business Plan to Advance Animal Disease Traceability. The Business Plan details recommended strategies and actions to enable existing State and Federal regulated and voluntary animal health programs, industry-administered management and

marketing programs, and various animal identification methods to work in harmony in the NAIS. The document also includes budget summaries and fiscal year 2008 budget plans, as well as species-specific performance goals and timelines. Elements of the Business Plan are discussed in greater detail below. We are now making the document available to the public for review and comment. We will solicit public comments and stakeholder feedback through the NAIS Web site.

Strategies

Strategy 1: Prioritize Species/Sectors

Prioritization of species and sectors will ensure that resources are applied where traceability advances are of the highest importance. The Business Plan first categorizes species based on existing tracing capabilities and the need for improvement. Priority species include the primary commercial food animal industries: Cattle, poultry (chickens and turkeys), swine, sheep, and goats. Equines are also included as a priority species because the frequency with which some horses are moved significant distances to one or more events where they are commingled with other horses that also may have been moved long distances from a variety of premises of origin raises concerns about the spread of disease. Additionally, sectors within each of the species referred to above have been prioritized to advance traceability where it is most needed.

Strategy 2: Harmonize Animal Identification Systems

The need for unique animal identification in government and industry programs is accelerating. As a result, producers are seeking improved and flexible identification methods and compatible processes and data standards that may be used for multiple purposes. The harmonization of animal identification systems will result in more cost-effective options, benefiting producers while achieving increased animal disease traceability for the entire industry.

Strategy 3: Standardize Data Elements for Disease Programs To Ensure Compatibility

APHIS will take steps to standardize data elements and make use of the standards in existing disease programs. Additionally, APHIS will consider a regulation to require the use of certain standardized data elements for import/export regulations, including the standardized premises identification number (PIN) to identify premises

importing and exporting livestock. The use of the PIN on interstate certificates of veterinary inspection will also be facilitated and encouraged. The information on locations participating in official disease control programs and on the animals' origin and destination premises that would be listed on interstate certificates of veterinary inspection and on import/export health certificates would greatly enhance animal disease tracing and emergency response capabilities.

Strategy 4: Integrate Automated Data Capture Technologies Into Disease Programs

APHIS will take steps to integrate electronic data capture and reporting technologies into existing disease programs. By using NAIS-compliant identification devices that support automated data capture technology and integrating handheld computers and readers to replace paper-based forms, animal health officials will be able to electronically record and submit essential data to the USDA's Animal Health and Surveillance Monitoring database and other appropriate animal health databases. We anticipate that the electronic collection of data will increase volume and quality, minimize data errors, and speed data entry into a searchable database.

Strategy 5: Partner With States

Working in close partnership with State, Tribal, and Territorial officials, APHIS will continue to facilitate the development of each State's animal disease traceability infrastructure. Each State's animal health officials will administer and manage localized plans reflecting the animal health priorities in individual regions.

Strategy 6: Collaborate With Industry and Sectors

Producer organizations, representing member interests, can accelerate the adoption of practices that advance traceability. APHIS has entered into cooperative agreements with nonprofit industry organizations to promote premises registration within various species groups. Collaboration with USDA-accredited veterinarians will facilitate the delivery of accurate information to clients, as well as enhance the adoption of animal identification data elements in everyday production management systems and disease-program activities at the producer level. Additional partnership efforts with industry alliances, service providers, auction markets, feedlots, harvesting facilities, and other industry sectors are a priority for APHIS.

Strategy 7: Advance Identification Technologies

Continued advancements in traceability require practical, affordable technology solutions that improve the efficiency and accuracy of animal identification data collection. APHIS will collaborate with stakeholders to facilitate the development of performance standards for identification devices and evaluate emerging technologies, with emphasis on systems that can operate at the “speed of commerce.”

Outcomes and Timelines

Because the need to advance traceability differs among the various species and sectors, it is important for us to establish clear priorities as we proceed with implementing the NAIS. Targeted timelines for key strategies and actions will guide the implementation of these priorities. Due in part to its size and diversification, the cattle industry, at this time, has the greatest need to advance traceability, including increasing the level of official identification. These challenges require more resources and time to achieve optimum tracing capability for the industry.

Achieving Necessary Participation

The seven strategies discussed above are designed to increase involvement in the NAIS in order to achieve a “critical mass” of participation, at which point at least 70 percent of the animals in a specific species would be identified and traceable either to their premises of origin, (e.g., cattle, sheep and goats) or to their last production premises (e.g., swine and poultry). This performance measure will enable us to gauge the progress being made towards the participation levels necessary to achieve the optimum traceability goal; the 70 percent figure is an interim measurement designed to support incremental advancement, particularly in the cattle industry, where significant improvement is necessary.

Comments about the Business Plan or other aspects of the NAIS may be submitted to USDA through the NAIS Web site e-mail address: animalidcomments@aphis.usda.gov or by mail to NAIS Program Staff, VS, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 200, Riverdale, MD 20737.

Done in Washington, DC, this 14th day of December 2007.

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. E7-24656 Filed 12-18-07; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

[Docket No. APHIS-2007-0147]

National Animal Identification System; User Guide and Additional Information Resources

AGENCY: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of availability and request for comments.

SUMMARY: We are advising the public that we have prepared a revised version of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) User Guide that was originally released in draft form in November 2006. The revised User Guide contains the most current information on how the system works and how producers may participate in the NAIS. We are making the revised User Guide available for review and comment.

ADDRESSES: The revised User Guide is available on the Internet at <http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/>. The document may also be viewed in our reading room. The reading room is located in room 1141 of the USDA South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC. Normal reading room hours are 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except holidays. To be sure someone is there to help you, please call (202) 690-2817 before coming.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Dr. Adam Grow, Director, Surveillance and Identification Programs, National Center for Animal Health Programs, VS, APHIS, 4700 River Road Unit 200, Riverdale, MD 20737-1231; (301) 734-3752.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

In November 2006, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) prepared a document entitled “National Animal Identification System (NAIS): A User Guide and Additional Information Resources.” The document, also known as the Draft User Guide, was intended to provide comprehensive information about the NAIS for people and entities wishing to participate in the system, which is voluntary at the Federal level.

We originally posted the Draft User Guide on the NAIS Internet Web site (<http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/>) in November 2006. Subsequently, we developed two technical guidance documents to supplement the Draft User

Guide. A notice announcing the availability of all three documents for public review and comment was published in the **Federal Register** on February 1, 2007 (72 FR 4680-4681, Docket No. APHIS-2007-0007).

In the February 2007 notice, we stated that the Draft User Guide replaced all previously published program documents, including the 2005 Draft Strategic Plan and Draft Program Standards (announced at 70 FR 23961-23963, May 6, 2005) and the 2006 NAIS Implementation Plan (announced at 71 FR 17805-17806, April 7, 2006). Those earlier documents had provided the opportunity for the public to comment on the NAIS as APHIS worked through many issues involving industry and the States and Tribes. We received valuable feedback from producers, State and Tribal animal health officials, and other interested stakeholders regarding those documents and the NAIS. The Draft User Guide that we then produced to replace the earlier documents represented the most up-to-date general information on the NAIS available at the time of its release.

The Draft User Guide provided comprehensive information about participating in the NAIS. Part I of the document provided a brief overview to familiarize producers with the NAIS, its goals, its organizational components, and other information concerning its ongoing implementation. The remainder of the document discussed each of the NAIS’ components in greater detail and provided operational-level “how to” information and resources. Part II of the document provided information about premises registration; Part III of the document discussed the animal identification component of the program; and Part IV of the document detailed the animal tracing component.

When we released the Draft User Guide to the public, we noted that the program would continue to evolve as details were addressed through ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders. Recently, we determined that a revision to the Draft User Guide was needed to reflect changes that have been made in the program in order to prevent confusion among stakeholders about these changes and to provide the most up-to-date information on the status of the NAIS. We are, therefore, now making available to the public for review and comment an updated version of the User Guide. We will accept public comments and stakeholder feedback on the document on an ongoing basis (see **ADDRESSES** above for commenting instructions). We expect that as the NAIS continues to evolve, so, too, will the User Guide.