

## USDA Endorses Industry-Recommended International Standards for Animal Identification Technologies

The U.S. Department of Agriculture strongly believes that the best approach to establishing the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) is as a voluntary system driven by the states and the private sector. Accordingly, USDA has adopted a technology-neutral position regarding animal identification methods and processes and purposefully not designated any specific identification technologies for use with NAIS, recognizing that the market must ultimately determine which methods should be used.

Although not selecting or requiring the use of specific technology, USDA recognizes the importance of having a basic level of standardization to ensure, among other things, compatibility across vendors in the national program, that technologies are adaptable or compatible with devices produced by different manufacturers, and that other countries recognize the identification technologies and/or devices used with NAIS. USDA has reviewed the recommendations of the NAIS Subcommittee that resulted from consensus of species working groups, and endorses the use of technology standards published by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

USDA's decision is supported by the species working groups, several of which (bison, cattle and equine) have recommended that ISO compliant radio frequency identification (RFID) technology be used with NAIS. Specifically, USDA endorses the use of ISO 11784 and 11785, which would establish an RFID technology standard for producers or service providers who elect to use radio frequency technology in the NAIS. While USDA is in favor of standardization and believes basic technology standards should be met, USDA remains technology-neutral and has not exclusively designated RFID or any other specific identification technology for use with NAIS.

Rather, when RFID technology is used, the incorporation of ISO 11784 and 11785 by USDA in authorizing the use of the Animal Identification Number (AIN) will be followed to ensure the compatibility across

vendors. "These standards are imperative so industry partners in NAIS can be assured one reader can scan and successfully read all AIN tags that have RFID technology," states Bruce Knight, undersecretary for USDA's marketing and regulatory programs mission area. "But USDA is not requiring the use of RFID tags or injectable implants; that remains a choice of the animal owner."

USDA will continue to consider emerging and developing technologies to ensure NAIS devices remain current with the marketplace. To encourage flexibility, USDA supports the establishment of standards for other technologies through the American National Standards Institute (ANSI); such standards could then, in turn, facilitate the development of standards for technologies at the international level. ANSI coordinates the development and use of voluntary consensus standards in the United States and represents the needs and views of U.S. stakeholders in standardization forums around the globe. The Institute oversees the creation, promulgation and use of thousands of norms and guidelines that directly impact businesses in nearly every sector. ANSI is also actively engaged in accrediting programs that assess conformance to standards.

Additionally, pilot or field trials will be considered for the demonstration of such technologies to ensure the NAIS can advance with such technologies. At present, APHIS is supporting field trials or pilot projects involving three additional radio frequencies and three biometric markers for use with the NAIS. Companies will have the opportunity to collect data in field conditions under the supervision of state and federal animal health officials, which is a necessary first step in attempting to support the development of standards through the ANSI and, ultimately, the ISO.

For more information on the NAIS, please visit this Web site: <http://www.usda.gov/nais>.

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