

USDA Forms NAIS Brand States Working Group

As part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's ongoing efforts to promote and advance the National Animal Identification System (NAIS), its Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service recently formed a brand states working group. The group, which is comprised of animal brand authorities, state veterinarians and animal identification coordinators from states with existing brand inspection programs, held its first meeting on January 20 in Denver, Colo.

"We are pleased that there is now a working group to represent the interests of the parties involved in branding and brand inspection," said Bruce Knight, undersecretary for USDA's marketing and regulatory programs mission area. "NAIS is a true partnership among states, industry and USDA, and the working groups play a vital role within that partnership. These groups interact frequently with the very producers affected by NAIS and help shape the program in a way that makes sense for all producers."

USDA has requested that the working group identify opportunities whereby existing state animal brand programs might complement NAIS. Currently, there are 15 states with active brand inspection programs. Within these states, registered brands, administered through recognized brand authorities, are often used for many common animal management needs. However, brand inspection programs themselves tend to differ from state to state, both in scope and in the information that is required to be recorded. In addition, states do not customarily use brands as identification for animal health purposes, particularly where unique individual animal identification is required.

The working group will review the amount of information currently associated with brand inspection programs, and determine how that information might best be available to state and federal animal health officials, if needed. The working group will also look at the current methods state brand programs use to collect and distribute information, in order to both avoid duplication with NAIS and to make each effort more efficient for producers.

NAIS is a modern, streamlined information system aimed to provide livestock owners and animal health officials with the information they need to respond quickly and effectively in the event of an animal disease outbreak. Voluntary at the federal level, NAIS is a partnership among states, tribes, industry and USDA, with each sector playing an integral role in implementing the program. NAIS has three components: premises registration, animal identification and animal tracing. Premises registration, which provides producers and animal health officials with an identification number for locations where livestock are housed or kept, has been ongoing since 2004, and there are now more than 368,000 premises registered nationwide. The second component, animal identification, is also underway and there have been more than 1.4 million animal identification number tags shipped to date. The animal tracing component will soon be available and will offer an additional option for producers to augment animal management decisions and better protect animal health.

Note to Reporters: USDA news releases, program announcements and media advisories are available on the Internet. For additional information on this topic, contact Ben Kaczmarek at (301) 734-0595 or visit the NAIS Web site at <www.usda.gov/nais>.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.