

## USDA Releases Guidelines for the Manufacture and Distribution of Official Identification Devices Under NAIS

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service today announced the implementation of the animal identification number (AIN) as the next phase of the voluntary National Animal Identification System (NAIS). The initial focus of the AIN is for individual cattle and swine. These species typically use identification eartags (referred to as AIN tags) when official identification is necessary (e.g., interstate commerce or disease programs). The use of the AIN will be expanded to other species that use other forms of identification, implants for example, in the future.

APHIS also has adopted an option with NAIS to allow producers to incorporate supplemental identification methods or technologies with the AIN tag such as radio frequency identification (RFID) and biometrics (e.g., DNA and retinal imaging). Supplemental identification technologies or methods may vary among species. To ensure compatibility and uniformity is achieved in the national program, however, APHIS will establish technology standards, when applicable, along with performance requirements. Performance standards for AIN tags and RFID-AIN tags are contained in the document entitled *Administration of Official Identification Devices with the Animal Identification Number* available at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/nais>.

Performance standards issued for AIN tags include, but are not limited to, the following.

- The tag must be designed for one-time use and be tamper evident.
- The printing on the tag may not readily be altered and should include the 15-digit AIN and U.S. shield.
- The AIN number must be readable at a distance of 30 inches.
- The tag must function and remain affixed to the animal for the expected lifetime of the animal.
- On average, not more than 1 percent of tags applied may be lost in the years following application.

For bison and cattle, APHIS supports the integration of radio frequency identification with the eartag. While public comments show an overwhelming

support for RFID-integrated eartags, other supplemental technologies remain an option for use with the AIN tag.

Companies or individuals wishing to manufacture or distribute AIN tags must apply for approval with USDA. The prerequisite for applying involves registering for a nonproducer participant number through the premises registration system in the state in which the company's headquarters is located and obtaining a level-2 USDA eauthentication account. An on-line identity verification system, eAuthentication, is needed to gain access to the AIN Management System that supports the distribution of AINs and AIN tags.

A level-2 eAuthentication account provides authorized users with specific roles to access the AIN Management System and provides the ability to conduct electronic business transactions with USDA via the Internet. To obtain an account with level-2 eAuthentication access, you must complete an account profile on-line at <http://www.eauth.egov.usda.gov/eauthCreateAccount.html>, and then visit the nearest USDA service center in person to prove your identity with a current state driver's license, state photo identification, U.S. passport, or U.S. military identification. For more information on how to obtain an eAuthentication account, please visit <http://www.eauth.egov.usda.gov/>.

The distribution strategy for AIN tags involves three key roles: AIN tag manufacturers, managers and resellers. Tag manufacturers are companies authorized by APHIS to manufacture approved identification devices and are responsible for the overall production and quality of the official identification devices.

Tag manufacturers are responsible for:

- Abiding by the terms and conditions set forth in the AIN Tag Manufacturer agreement;
- Completing an AIN tag manufacturer training program;
- Imprinting the "840" number and U.S. shield on identification devices;
- Maintaining the uniqueness of AINs allocated to them; and
- Reporting the distribution of all AIN tags to the AIN Management System within 24 hours of shipment.

Tag managers are individuals or companies that distribute AIN tags to another manager, reseller or registered premises. An AIN tag manager must have an AIN tag distribution agreement with an AIN tag manufacturer.

Tag managers are responsible for:

- Completing an AIN tag manager training program;

- Distributing AIN tags to registered premises or registered nonproducer participant;
- Maintaining a dated inventory of AIN tags received from manufacturers;
- Educating producers on the proper use of official AIN tags; and
- Reporting the distribution of all AIN tags to the AIN Management System within 24 hours of shipment.

Tag resellers function similarly to tag managers but operate under a marketing agreement with an AIN tag manager instead of a manufacturer. Like a tag manager, tag resellers are responsible for:

- Completing an AIN tag manager training program;
- Distributing AIN tags to registered premises or registered nonproducer participant;
- Maintaining a dated inventory of AIN tags received from manufacturers;
- Educating producers on the proper use of official AIN tags; and
- Reporting the distribution of all AIN tags to the AIN Management System within 24 hours of shipment.

For more information on how to become an AIN tag manufacturer or distributor, please consult the document entitled *Administration of Official Identification Devices with the Animal Identification Number* available at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/nais>.

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