

## Animal Health and Market Access

### Protecting animal health is a priority

As a producer, maintaining the health of your animals is important. You already take regular precautions to help prevent your animals from becoming sick, including providing vaccinations, visiting with veterinarians, and practicing farm biosecurity.

Due to the diligence of producers and veterinarians nationwide, animal health throughout the United States has improved greatly over the past century. However, disease outbreaks can still occur, even under the best circumstances.

One additional way to help protect your animals from disease is by participating in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Animal Identification System (NAIS). The goals of this optional nationwide system are to limit the spread of animal diseases, minimize animal losses and economic impact, and protect producers' livelihoods. NAIS helps producers and animal health officials respond quickly and effectively to animal health events in the United States.

### How does NAIS help during an animal health event?

During an animal health event, the information in NAIS provides answers to

three essential questions. Where have infected animals been? What other animals have been exposed to the disease? What additional premises and animals are at risk of exposure?

These three questions are critical to determining the size and scope of a disease outbreak. The more quickly they can be answered, the less disease will spread, and the less impact an outbreak will have on producers and the economy.

### Disease outbreaks can impact your plans to transport animals

In today's livestock industry, selling animals usually means moving them. Even if you're not in the business of selling animals, you may need to transport your animals at some point. A single report of a disease can shut down the movement of all animals in the surrounding areas. Movement restrictions disrupt agricultural markets, exhibitions, and other livestock activities and business operations. Your operation could suffer even if your animals are not infected. In a disease situation, local and State officials can use NAIS information to quickly define the areas affected by an outbreak—keeping markets open for unaffected producers and preventing unnecessary movement restrictions.

### *Foot and Mouth Disease Outbreaks in Great Britain*

Foot and mouth disease (FMD) is a highly contagious viral infection that affects cloven-footed animals, including cows, pigs, and sheep. During the past 10 years, the United Kingdom has faced two FMD outbreaks.

In 2001, an FMD outbreak lasted from February until September, with more than 2,000 cases. In order to control the virus and end the outbreak, officials in the United Kingdom depopulated more than 10 million animals and placed movement restrictions on both animal and people that lasted for months. Foreign countries shut down their imports of affected species. The cost of the outbreak was approximately \$16 billion (U.S. dollars).

In 2007, following the implementation of an animal identification system, the United Kingdom faced another FMD outbreak. This time, due to rapid response by animal health officials, along with the aid of animal identification and movement records, the outbreak lasted just 2 months. Only 8 animals were infected, and officials only depopulated 1,578 animals. Animal movement and trade were still affected but not severely as in 2001. The overall cost of the 2007 FMD outbreak was around \$1 billion (U.S. dollars).

## Animal health emergencies can also affect consumer confidence

Your livelihood depends on the ability to deliver a wholesome product to your customers. The bottom line is maintaining consumer confidence and through that confidence, demand for the products you produce. When there is a huge increase of media coverage on a foreign animal disease outbreak, consumer awareness is very high—even though the risk to the public is low. Efficient and effective animal traceback efforts help reassure customers and consumers. NAIS speeds up the traceback process, allowing confidence to return to pre-outbreak levels more quickly.

## Animal health affects more than just your animals

The threat of an animal disease outbreak in the United States is real. Unfortunately, the timing and severity of an outbreak are impossible to predict. It is, however, certain that—when it comes to a disease event—the time it takes to contain and control or eradicate the disease is the key factor that determines the economic losses and other social harms associated with the situation.

Rapid response has a number of economic benefits for producers. Any producer whose premises has been impacted by disease can attest to the serious losses and hardships that result. They may include the loss of irreplaceable breeding stock/bloodlines, lower

prices, movement restrictions, lost business and income, animal distress and loss resulting from the disease and eradication effort, and the labor and time involved with this work.

The more quickly and effectively a disease is contained, the less likely it is that the disease will spread to additional premises. This means all the difference for producers who are spared from having their premises exposed to disease. When fewer producers are affected by disease, the economic strain—decreased incomes, lost jobs, loss of animals and livelihoods—on entire communities is reduced. The faster the disease response, the faster an animal disease is isolated, and the sooner life gets back to normal for everyone.

By facilitating rapid disease response, NAIS helps to protect the larger community from the impact of a disease situation. Rapid disease response reduces the strain on social programs, the environmental impact, and the loss of jobs and tourism in affected communities.

## Protect your animals' health and your market access—sign up for NAIS today

NAIS participation starts with the premises identification number, or PIN. To sign up for your PIN, please visit: <http://www.usda.gov/nais/getPIN>. For information about animal identification, you can visit: <http://www.usda.gov/nais/840>. Also, for additional details about NAIS and animal tracing, please visit: <http://www.usda.gov/nais>.

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### Additional Information

For more information about NAIS, contact:  
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**Your Animals. Your Livelihood. Your Future. Your NAIS.**