

Essential Information about the National Animal Identification System

The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) is an animal health program

The risk of an animal disease outbreak in the United States is very real. Being able to trace a disease back to its source—and do that quickly—is essential to limit the spread of the disease and minimize its negative impact on the agriculture industry.

NAIS is a modern, streamlined information system that helps producers and animal health officials respond quickly and effectively to animal health events in the United States. Its focus is animal health, rapid disease containment, minimization of animal losses and economic impact, and the protection of producers' livelihoods.

NAIS is a flexible system

NAIS is not one-size-fits-all. Each individual producer can customize their level of participation to fit their business needs. There are three components to NAIS, and producers can take part in one, two, or all three.

Producers are encouraged to participate in the NAIS components that would offer the most effective level of traceability for their animals. For animals that do not leave their birth farm or commingle with animals from other locations, a PIN number provides adequate traceability. For animals that do leave the farm and commingle with other animals at shows or sales, animal identification offers a higher level of traceability. Animal tracing offers the greatest level of traceability for animals that move frequently and commingle with other animals (at fairs, auctions, sporting events, etc.).

While NAIS is first and foremost an animal health program, participants can also use NAIS components to meet other business goals, beyond animal health. The ability to streamline data recording and use one number for many purposes offers producers increased efficiency.

In addition to assisting with herd management, PINs and AINs can be used on official health certificates. AIN devices also meet the requirements for USDA Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) marketing programs, including country of origin labeling (COOL). The numbers can even be used in genetic programs and breed registries.

NAIS Components

Premises Registration involves signing up to receive a Premises Identification Number (PIN). The PIN is the standard in the United States for identifying the location of all livestock and poultry operations and/or facilities.

Animal Identification involves identifying animals, either individually or as a group. This identification serves as a tool to enhance animal disease traceability. It is linked to the PIN where the animal is kept when the identification is assigned.

Animal Tracing involves the reporting of significant movements of animals already identified by an AIN or a group identification number (GIN). These movements are reported by the person responsible for the animals and recorded in State and privately owned Animal Tracing Databases (ATDs). If an animal health event occurs, animal movement records may be requested by State and Federal animal health authorities in order to perform tracebacks more quickly and efficiently.

It is the producer's choice to participate in NAIS

There are no Federal penalties or enforcement mechanisms associated with NAIS. There are no plans to make NAIS mandatory at the Federal level. It is up to the producer to decide whether they wish to participate at all, and if so, to what extent.

However, individual States and Tribes do have the right to mandate participation within their boundaries if they so choose. Some States have made this choice.

Producer information is protected

Federal law protects individuals' private information and confidential business information from disclosure. Through both intent and design, the NAIS is limited in terms of the type and quantity of information collected and maintained by the Federal government. USDA keeps only simple records.

Other information, such as movement records, is kept in private or State-controlled databases. However, should an animal health event arise, USDA will quickly be able to request this information from the ATDs and use it to conduct rapid and effective disease investigations.

NAIS is evolving to meet the needs of producers and animal health officials

NAIS continues to evolve to meet producer demands. Participant input to the program is critical. As NAIS has progressed, the needs and comments of many individuals have shaped its development. Unique needs and preferences must be considered and addressed to make the system work well for different parts of the animal industry and also for U.S. producers who raise many different species of animals in many different environments.

NAIS works best if there is active involvement and feedback from the States, industry, and producers. Ongoing dialogue with all stakeholders is important and invited. Comments are always welcome, whether through the Web site, industry groups, or NAIS working groups. Visit <http://www.usda.gov/nais> for details on how to participate in a working group or submit comments online.

Additional Information

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