

## A Defining Moment: 22 Pages of Details in the NAIS Plan

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I experienced a defining moment in the life of a beef producer the other day while scrolling through various news groups on the Internet. The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) Draft Strategic Plan 2005 to 2009, published by the USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, showed up. My initial attempt to print the plan failed, but with persistence the Internet finally yielded a 22-page copy at <http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/index.shtml>.

Few events may affect the animal industry as much as the implementation of a national identification system, so it is important to pay attention to the details. (The next several BeefTalk columns will provide pro and con highlights of the program.) The initial process, however, must be a link to the people in charge. The previously mentioned Web site allows comments to be submitted. A written response also can be sent.

To send a comment, you will need the following information: The reference document number is agency docket 05-015-1, the docket identification is APHIS-2005-0044, the title of the docket is the "National Animal Identification System; Notice of Availability of a Draft Strategic Plan and Draft Program Standards." The primary contact is Neil Hammerschmidt, animal identification officer, eradication and surveillance team, APHIS, 4700 River Road, Unit 43, Riverdale, MD 20737-1231. The telephone number is (301) 734-5571. Comments are being accepted until June 6, 2005.

The Web site already shows there is a mixed reaction at various emotional degrees. As a starting point, referencing the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) Draft Strategic Plan, the overall goal of the program is "to identify all animals and premises that have had contact with a foreign or domestic animal disease of concern within 48 hours after discovery."

At the Dickinson Research Extension Center, we have used existing systems to track calves leaving North Dakota. Our conclusion is that current

marketing tools and paper trails provide adequate information for the tracking of calves leaving the original production unit. The center's latest estimates are that it takes 160 hours for one person to track down more than 85 percent of 4,672 head of calves. We found the remaining 15 percent with the assistance of the local brand inspection service. Seventeen calves were not traced. In the end, about 20 to 30 people assigned to the task probably could attain the results in the required 48 hours.

With that data as the backdrop, the fundamental goal of the plan seems achievable. The details of the plan are where more discussion ensues. Two of the three major components of the current plan are as follows:

The first component, currently being implemented, is the assignment of a premises number to all locations in the U.S. that have any of the required identifiable animals in residence. Essentially, if something on your premises moves without your assistance, you probably need a number. The premises number simply converts your current 911 address or a physical description of the place to an alphanumeric descriptor. For example, your premises could be labeled A123R69. The process is needed to keep the computers happy.

A second component is the assigning of a unique animal identification number consisting of 15 digits. The current plan adds more thought to that component and will take more space to think through.

For now, the focal point remains the tracing of animals within 48 hours if there is a disease concern. More next time, but keep thinking.

May you find all your NAIS-approved ear tags.

Your comments are always welcome at [www.Beeftalk.com](http://www.Beeftalk.com). For more information, contact the NDBCIA Office, 1133 State Ave., Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to [www.CHAPS2000.com](http://www.CHAPS2000.com) on the Internet.

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## Contact for comments on proposed National Animal Identification System

**Agency Docket Number:** 05-015-1

**Docket ID:** APHIS-2005-0044

**Title:** National Animal Identification System; Notice of Availability of a Draft Strategic Plan and Draft Program Standards

**Description:** Primary Contact: Neil Hammerschmidt,  
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**Comment Period End Date**  
**(mm/dd/yyyy):** 06-06-2005