
The National Animal Identification System's Key Components

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The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) Draft Strategic Plan, as proposed by the USDA, has three key components: premises registration, individual animal identification and animal tracking. These three key components have only one purpose, which is to assist the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) “establish the animal information foundation necessary to support animal disease monitoring, surveillance, control and eradication programs.”

As stated in the plan, the principal work involved with the plan will be the responsibility of the individual states, allowing for local direction. APHIS will monitor individual state performance.

The first critical component is the national implementation of premises identification. Within the plan, the concept of premises is simply an address, essentially a surrogate address for computer storage and retrieval. At times considerable debate surfaces, but in the world of modern-day technology, computer bytes still count and efficiency of operation simply demands an efficient, space-saving process to track location data. Computer data may seem infinite, but data storage can be overwhelming and a small number that connects to a reference file makes sense.

Several options are available for producers to register their premises. Simply contact your local state veterinarian or local producer association with your 911 address or physical map description of the livestock premises and the process should be complete.

The second key component is a much more complicated issue. The NAIS plan calls for the assignment of a unique identification number to every animal in the country, unless the animals are always grouped with no possible opportunity for commingling with outside animals. The plan states that “animals will be identified either individually with a unique animal identification number or, if they are managed and moved through the production chain as a group, with a group/lot identification number.”

Once placed on the animal, the individual animal data requested (perhaps eventually mandatory) includes the following: a documentation of why the animal is be-

ing handled, the premises identification of the animal holder as well as premises identification of the destination, the event date and time, the animal identification number, the species, type of identification, birth date, age of animal, gender of animal, breed of animal, additional remarks relating to the animal, status of the animal and four potential alternate animal identification numbers. Alternate animal identification numbers could be used, but the plan appears to require that the animal be tattooed if an alternate identification is used.

The third key component of the system is the combining of components one and two into a workable system “to achieve the 48-hour traceback objective.” This is no small task. Is this achievable? It seems workable. The sun is, as yet, not shining on the end of 2008, the goal to have the plan in place.

The closing date for comments is June 6. Since the draft plan was made available for public comment, 47 people have responded to the listening sessions. This is your chance to comment, so why not step up? The plan and submitted comments, as well as the ability to submit a comment, is available at <http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/index.shtml>. The primary contact for the USDA is Neil Hammerschmidt, eradication and surveillance team animal identification officer, APHIS, 4700 River Road, Unit 43, Riverdale, MD 20737-1231. The reference document is agency docket number 05-015-1 and the docket identification number is APHIS-2005-0044.

Now is the time to read and comment.

May you find all your NAIS-approved Ear Tags.

Your comments are always welcome at www.BeefTalk.com. For more information, contact the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association, 1133 State Avenue, Dickinson, ND 58601 or go to www.CHAPS2000.com on the Internet. In correspondence about this column, refer to BT0250.

NAIS Key Components

1. Premises registration
2. Animal identification
3. Animal tracking

Source: USDA National Animal Identification System Draft Strategic Plan. The reference document is agency docket number 05-015-1 and the docket identification number is APHIS-2005-0044.