

Attitude Change Alert

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With all the recent announcements and reannouncements, nothing would indicate that the National Animal Identification System is slowing up. In fact, given recent world issues and the interactions of people and the food chain, saying that the program is accelerating may be more correct.

It is just a matter of time before something is going to happen. When the final plans are printed, those involved with the production of food will have changed. Some would say printing such statements only fuels the regulatory process, but on the flip side, ignoring the proposals and putting one's head in the sand will only cause further consternation and frustration.

So where is the industry? A recent cooperative test project by the Dickinson Research Extension Center (DREC) and the Stockmen's Livestock Exchange, an area cattle marketing center, revealed some interesting data. Last fall, during heavy calf runs, producers were encouraged to participate in a program to have individual electronic identification (EID) tags placed in their 2005 calf crop. The tags and labor to place the tags in the calves were provided at no cost to producers. The dates for the electronic tagging were Oct. 19, Oct. 26, Nov. 2 and Nov. 9.

The tagged animals were sold the following day at the Stockmen's Livestock Exchange's weekly sale. The process was advertised in area livestock publications, weekly newspapers and a center-fold color spread in the October issue of the North Dakota Stockman, the official publication of the North Dakota Stockmen's Association. The four events were well covered. Some news media actually covered the activities.

With the identification of animals front and center in the beef business, the general feeling was that some producers would take advantage of the free trial. The test would give producers an opportunity to participate in a tagging exercise, see first hand how it works and learn more about how a calf identification program could be beneficial.

In addition to the tagging opportunities, producers would be given the option of having their data downloaded by the DREC into an advanced data management system. All cattle were to be tagged and processed through the portable DREC cattle working facility, which included a double alley, scale and head gate. The DREC would scan each EID tag, which was placed in the left ear of the calves, and then enter the load numbers with the associated EID tag.

The essence of the program was to determine the effort necessary to tag calves and then determine the associated costs. The list of producer participation will not fill an extensive table.

The first day, one producer showed up and we read 58 calves. The calves previously were tagged with electronic tags. The process took just under 15 minutes. No producers brought their calves in to receive the free processing and tagging the other three days.

We are trained to analyze numbers, and note trends and changing times, but the lack of numbers also can make a significant point. In this case, free tags and free labor did not jar loose a response from producers.

In retrospect, the interest was, for all practical purposes, zero. It was just another academic exercise that will go away. But, will the desire to have beef animals individually identified go away? It may or may not. The future is hard to predict, but if enough fingers point in one direction, maybe there is something happening.

Nobody's hollering yet, but the DREC will continue to work with the North Dakota Beef Cattle Improvement Association to help make sense of a very complicated process--tagging a calf.

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 BT0295.

NO SHOWS!

Industry response to the Dickinson Research Extension Center's and Stockmen's Livestock Exchange Electronic tag demonstration

Sale Date	Calves
October 19	58
October 26	0
November 2	0
November 9	0

