

USDA and Industry Developing National Animal Identification Plan

A key to safeguarding the Nation's livestock herds from the drastic effects of disease is to have a national plan in place to identify livestock. Recognition of this need is being demonstrated through the united effort of several segments of the livestock industry, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and State animal health officials.

This effort began in early 2002, when the National Institute for Animal Agriculture's (NIAA) Animal Identification and Information System committee organized a task force of approximately 70 representatives from more than 30 stakeholder groups. After months of work, the task force produced a National Identification Work Plan and presented it at the NIAA "ID/INFO EXPO" in July 2002. Using input from that meeting, a final draft of the work plan was presented to the U.S. Animal Health Association (USAHA) at its annual meeting in October 2002.

USAHA accepted the plan with a resolution that called for Veterinary Services (VS) in USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to establish a national animal identification development team that would develop a national plan using the work plan as a guide.

VS staff identified key industry and State leaders who agreed to serve as the steering committee of the National Animal Identification Development team. John Wortman, chairman of the USAHA Livestock Identification Committee, and Valerie Ragan, assistant deputy administrator for USDA, APHIS, VS, co-chair the steering committee.

Subcommittees on communication, transition, standards, governance and information technology have been established to develop components of the national plan. The group is moving quickly, and expects to have a draft plan completed this summer. A national identification plan is needed for disease tracking, and APHIS is confident that the steering committee can lead the effort to develop one.

The need to work together has been clear from the start. The members of the steering committee and subcommittees will not be representing special interests or organizations but will function as problem

solvers to develop the draft plan for a national identification and traceability system. This system is expected to improve the ability to manage the health of the Nation's livestock herd.

Industry stakeholders will have ample opportunity to review the draft and comment on it. Implementation will take place only after the plan is finalized and receives broad industry support. Much more work will be required before the plan is implemented within the various industry segments.

Note to Stakeholders: Stakeholders announcements and other APHIS information are available on the Internet. Access the APHIS home page by pointing your Web browser to <http://www.aphis.usda.gov> and clicking on the "News" button. For additional information on this topic, contact Madelaine Fletcher at (301) 734-6125 or by e-mail at madelaine.fletcher@aphis.usda.gov.

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