

New Tag Requirements In Effect For Some Kentucky Breeding Cattle

LEXINGTON, KY.

More than 150,000 breeding cattle 18 months and older pass through Kentucky's stockyards each year. Because of the need for traceability where disease is concerned, all these cattle must be identified with the state veterinarian's office.

"We have a need for traceability," said Michelle Arnold, extension veterinarian for the University of Kentucky College of Agriculture. "With classic diseases like brucellosis and tuberculosis, emerging diseases like bovine spongiform encephalitis and the potential for foreign animal diseases such as foot and mouth disease, we have to be able to follow cattle through the sale process back to the farm of origin."

The new requirements went into effect in mid-February and state that cattle must have official ear tags, which are available from the state veterinarian's office.

Staffs of the state veterinarian's office and the U.S. Department of Agriculture area veterinarian's office are working cooperatively with market veterinarians and stockyard management to implement the requirement. The state veterinarian's office acted in advance of federal traceability requirements for interstate movement of livestock that are expected to be published this spring.

"When disease is identified in Kentucky cattle, it is important to identify affected and exposed animals as quickly as possible and with a minimum of cost and inconvenience to producers," said Robert Stout, Kentucky's state veterinarian. "This requirement will make it easier for the Office of the State Veterinarian to pinpoint outbreaks and eradicate them while

unaffected producers can carry on with business as usual."

Arnold said that the requirement could actually be a benefit for producers and offer them better market access. Since Congress did not fund the National Animal Identification System, Kentucky's requirement fills a gap and ensures that breeding cattle older than 18 months will have a traceable identification number.

"Veterinarians, markets and producers will be able to obtain the tags," Arnold said. "If cattle arrive at the stockyards with official tags, those tags won't be removed and no new tags will be added. However, if cattle arrive at the stockyards without tags, they'll receive either the most commonly used metal ear tag approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture or an RFID tag in the 840 series or stamped with a USDA shield."

The tags will be scanned and the state veterinarian's office will hold all the scanned information and only access it to trace an animal for disease tracking purposes.

Arnold said plans are to develop a bidirectional link from the UK Veterinary Diagnostic Lab to the Office of the State Veterinarian via the KDA-USASHERDS database.

"Hopefully, as the program proves successful, it will gain more funding for technology updates and staff support," Arnold said.

Additional information about animal disease traceability is available at <http://animaldisease-traceability.com>; <http://animalagriculture.org> under the Information and Hot Topics tabs and <http://usaha.org/committees/id/id.shtml>.

Direct questions and concerns to Arnold at Michelle.Arnold@uky.edu. Δ



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