

USDA Scraps Animal Identification System

DR. TERESA L. STECKLER

MT. VERNON, ILL.



Not too long ago, the United States Department of Agriculture unveiled a new vision for the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). This new plan was designed to identify issues confronting each species and also identify

seven key strategies to move NAIS forward.

This plan stirred quite a debate in the agricultural community. According to the 2007 plan, vertical integration in certain segments of agriculture, such as the U.S. commercial poultry industry, facilitated tracing individual birds back to their original premises within 48 hours. However, due to diverse segments and lack of vertical integration, the beef industry was far from achieving a 48-hour trace back time.

That may well be a moot point for the moment. Agriculture Secretary Vilsack announced on February 5 that the USDA will scrap the controversial voluntary NAIS program. This change comes after holding a listening tour in several cities as well as receiving comments from a wide spectrum of concerned groups. Many concerns about the proposed plan were conveyed. Cost, liability, confidentiality and who retains the data were most often expressed.

In response to these concerns, the USDA will now develop a new, more flexible framework for animal disease traceability in the United States. Also, the USDA will undertake several other actions to further strengthen its disease prevention and response capabilities. Essentially, the USDA will shift responsibility to the states for a

new program that would apply only to animals that move in interstate commerce.

The USDA's website, www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability, outlines the basic principles of this new program for improved animal disease traceability. These principles will

- Apply only to animals moved in interstate commerce

- Be administered by the states and tribal nations to provide more flexibility

- Encourage the use of lower-cost technology

- Be implemented transparently through federal regulations and the full rulemaking process

In conjunction with this announcement, USDA said it will also take the following actions to strengthen protections against the entry and spread of animal disease:

- Accelerate actions to lessen the risk from diseases, such as tuberculosis, posed by imported animals

- Initiate and update analyses on how animal diseases travel into the country

- Improve response capabilities

- Focus on greater collaboration and analyses with states and industry on overall potential disease risk

However, there are several questions that remain unanswered. How will the USDA handle 50 different state programs and the myriad of individual animal ID that can be used? If data is stored by each state, how will the resources be secured to implement a new mandate? How will this data be handled for interstate transactions? Only time will tell . . . Δ

DR. TERESA L. STECKLER: Extension Specialist, Animal Systems/Beef, University of Illinois



Link Directly To: **AGROTAIN**



Link Directly To: **APACHE**



Link Directly To: **MONSANTO**



Link Directly To: **SYNGENTA**