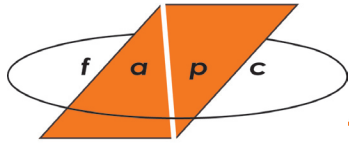


Food and Agricultural Products Center



FLASH!!

January 26, 2004

National Animal Identification Plan may be Implemented

STILLWATER, Okla. – The agricultural industry and the U.S. government are working on developing a trace back system that can accurately and completely identify domestic animals, which may have been exposed to foreign animal disease.

The idea for this system, the United States Animal Identification Plan, was in the planning stages before the Dec. 23, 2003 U.S. Department of Agricultural announcement of the case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy found in a dairy cow in Washington State.

If completed, USAIP would help identify animals exposed to animal diseases, such as BSE, said Jacob Nelson, meats processing manager for the Oklahoma Food and Agricultural Products Research and Technology Center.

BSE is a chronic, degenerative disorder affecting the central nervous system of cattle. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, "the exact cause of BSE is not known but it is generally accepted by the scientific community that infectious forms of a type of protein, prions, normally found in animals cause BSE. In cattle with BSE, these abnormal prions initially occur in the small intestines and tonsils, and are found in central nervous tissues, such as the brain and spinal cord, and other tissues of infected animals experiencing later stages of the disease."

The USAIP currently includes domestic cattle, bison, swine, sheep, goats, cervids (deer and elk), equine, poultry, game birds, aquaculture, camelids (llamas, alpacas, etc.) and ratites (ostriches, emus, etc), but the

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primary focus for implementation appears to be within the beef industry.

"The team's focus for the plan is maintaining the health and economic viability of U.S. animal agriculture," Nelson said. "This is viewed to be critical to the industry and to the safety of the U.S. food supply."

According to a draft document presented at the 2003 annual meeting of the United States Animal Health Association, four basic requirements must be achieved before implementation can occur.

These requirements include a national premises system, the creation and maintenance of a national database, individual animal identification and the ability to track or trace individual animals.

If these basic requirements are achieved, the implementation of the plan will be comprised of three phases.

The objective for phase one is to incorporate state and national premises identification methods that will identify locations that manage and/or hold cattle and has a target completion date of July 2004.

When phase two is complete, both interstate and intrastate commerce will include individual cattle identification.

The final phase is to incorporate radio-frequency identification technology in slaughter plants and live markets to trace live animal movement. The target completion date for phases two and three is July 2005.

According to the development team for the USAIP, "achieving this goal will enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of current animal health regulatory programs."

The USAIP is being prepared by the National Institute for Animal Agriculture and United States Animal Health Association and is facilitated by the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. For more information on USAIP, visit www.usaip.info.

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