

Tracking the Traceability Effort

Areas of consensus developed among industry and regulatory leaders in ongoing animal disease traceability debate.

Strong and ongoing collaboration among producers, commercial interests and regulatory agencies at both the state and federal level is the key component to successful animal disease traceability in the United States.

This was just one point of agreement included in a white paper developed from the discussions at the Joint Strategy Forum on Animal Disease Traceability (Forum), which was collaboratively developed by the National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) and the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) and hosted Aug. 30-31 in Denver, Colo.

The white paper summarizes the main discussion points reached by the 193 individuals who attended the Forum. Forty-three states, four tribes, 33 state animal health agencies, 38 industry organizations, 8 universities, and 34 producers and supply companies were represented at the Forum. In addition, representatives from Canada, Mexico and Japan were among the attendees.

Forum attendees recognized a significant need for more efficient and effective animal disease traceability among all states and livestock species. The white paper includes in-depth notes from the Forum discussions on several subjects, including:

- ▶ The inclusion of identifying feeder cattle after a workable system is in place for adult cattle.
- ▶ The use and relevance of “Brite” tags, back tags and brands.
- ▶ Reasonable timelines and benchmarks for states to implement a traceability system.
- ▶ How to accommodate the needs of different species.
- ▶ Uniform data collection among states.
- ▶ The use of official “840” ear tags for U.S.-born animals.
- ▶ Education and outreach to animal producers, handlers, marketers and processors in regard to new requirements.

**It is anticipated
USDA will publish
a proposed rule
on animal disease
traceability by April
2011, providing a
60- to 90-day public
comment period.**



PHOTO BY SHAUNA ROSE HERMEL

According to the white paper, the focus of the Forum was on the preliminary directions the Traceability Regulation Working Group (TRWG) is suggesting in the areas of official identification, exemptions, performance standards, compliance components, recordkeeping requirements, and proposed timelines.

The white paper notes that efforts to develop animal identification methods and systems to provide traceability have been under way for several years; however, issues such as data confidentiality, system costs, a lack of understanding of device and reader technology, and a lack of standardization has led to frustration and pushback from producers.

During February 2010, USDA announced a new, flexible framework for animal disease traceability in the United States. The framework is projected to provide the basic tenets of an improved animal disease traceability capability in the United States. USDA suggests it will:

- ▶ only apply 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; and
- ▶ be implemented transparently through federal regulations and the full rulemaking process.

Following the announcement of the new direction, state and tribal animal health officials, through the Traceability Regulation Working Group, have been developing the basic tenants of the new traceability framework. It is anticipated that USDA will draft a proposed rule on animal disease traceability, which is projected to be published by April 2011, and provide for a 60- to 90-day public comment period.

Visit www.animaldiseasetraceability.com for more information about the meeting and to download the white paper. In addition, other animal disease traceability resources are available at the website.



Editor's Note: This article was provided as a news release by NIAA and USAHA. More information about the organizations and their purposes is available at www.animalagriculture.org and www.usaha.org, respectively.