

# National Animal ID Inches Forward

As first step, premises identification programs are underway in some states.

by *Kindra Gordon*

Implementation of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) for livestock across the United States is moving ahead, reported Neil Hammerschmidt, who addressed participants at the 2004 National Angus Conference and Tour in Roanoke, Va., Sept. 15. Hammerschmidt is the NAIS Coordinator within the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

Hammerschmidt explained that the goal of the system remains a 48-hour traceback capability in order to support animal disease control, surveillance and eradication programs.

"The primary reason we need a national ID system is for animal health," said Hammerschmidt, who posed the question: "Where would our industry be today if we took ID out of the equation last Dec. 23, when the BSE case in Washington state was announced?"

He added, "The industry has some individual animal ID systems in place, but there are multiple systems that are not all compatible. We need one uniform, national system."

Components of the national plan currently call for a premises ID system, individual animal ID (or unit/group ID for large groups like hogs or poultry that stay together through the production chain), and tracking of animal movements. As USDA moves ahead to implement such a program, Hammerschmidt said it will stay in tune with the grassroots

level. "Practicality and affordability will be taken into consideration."



## Premises ID first priority

Nationally, the first priority for the program is premises ID, which identifies any location where livestock are confined or managed, such as a farm, ranch, sale barn or feedlot.

Hammerschmidt emphasized that premises ID is not ownership — it's location. "Premises ID is location-based because that is what is needed for traceback," he explained. "A location or premises will allow us to determine what animals were commingled with an animal of concern."

He added, "Each state is responsible for the registration of premises within their geographic area using the NAIS standards to ensure a nationwide, compatible system evolves."

Hammerschmidt said as premises registration gets underway, some livestock operators may only need one premises ID number, while some may opt for multiple premises numbers.

"Sometimes multiple ID numbers may be advantageous — for example, if a producer has a commercial and purebred herd where animals are kept on separate operations," he explained. "Then if a disease issue occurs, only one premises would potentially be quarantined, while other locations with separate premises identification may be able to continue to operate and market cattle."

## Registering for premises ID

Nebraska, South Dakota and Illinois have already made registration for premises identification (ID) available to livestock operators in their states. The process is being overseen by each of these states' departments of agriculture, and registration can take place through the Internet or by requesting registration forms through the mail.

A national Internet site has been set up at [www.animalid.us](http://www.animalid.us), where registrants can click on their home states (as the program is made available). Then, system prompts will take registrants through a five-step process. Once complete, the information is electronically forwarded to the state's respective department of agriculture, where its authenticity will be verified and the federal premises ID number will be issued.

Presently, the registration process remains voluntary, but states are offering some incentives

Implementation of premises ID is already beginning in a handful of states on a voluntary basis. The effort was bolstered by the more than \$11 million USDA awarded to 29 state and tribal governments in August specifically to advance the premises ID process, along with conducting field trials for administering animal ID and collecting animal movement data.

Nebraska and South Dakota were among the first receiving USDA funding to make available a premises ID program to livestock producers in compliance with the NAIS. The USDA is overseeing the registration process, which allows producers, livestock market operators and others with livestock facilities to register their premises via the Internet or request registration forms through the mail. (See "Registering for premises ID," below, for more information.)

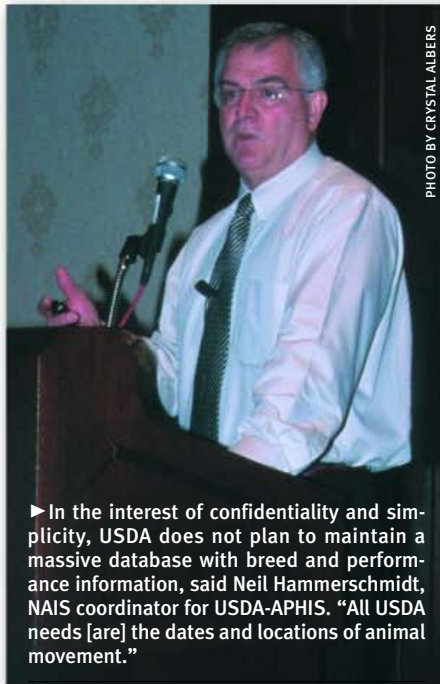
Hammerschmidt reported that the goal is for all states to have an operational premises ID system by midyear 2005.

### Animal ID and tracking

The next priority for the NAIS will then be individual animal ID, where all animals will be assigned their own 15-digit codes. The first three digits of all American-born animals will be 840, signifying that they were born in the United States. The 15-digit code will be used to track an animal's movements from location to location throughout its lifetime — even if it goes across an international border.

Hammerschmidt said Canada has already implemented this system, which means Canadian cattle coming in will be identified with their own country code.

As this phase of the NAIS evolves, Hammerschmidt admitted, collecting animal movement data on all livestock in the United States will be the greatest challenge. However, in the interest of confidentiality and simplicity, he said USDA does not plan to maintain a massive database with breed and performance information. "All USDA needs [are] the dates and locations of animal movement," Hammerschmidt said.



► In the interest of confidentiality and simplicity, USDA does not plan to maintain a massive database with breed and performance information, said Neil Hammerschmidt, NAIS coordinator for USDA-APHIS. "All USDA needs [are] the dates and locations of animal movement."

Administration of the program is expected to be supported through breed organizations, associations and third-party vendors. Hammerschmidt said these "managers" will work with USDA to provide the ID devices to the industry and report what premises received what animal ID numbers.

As the NAIS implementation continues to unfold, Hammerschmidt said the success of America's program will hinge on the ability of industry partners to work together. "A national animal ID plan is an enormous undertaking that can only be successful with a strong industry and government partnership," he said.

More information on NAIS is available at [www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/nais/nais.html](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/nais/nais.html).



**Editor's Note:** To listen to the audio and view the PowerPoint® for this presentation, visit the News/Audio link at [www.nationalangusconference.com](http://www.nationalangusconference.com), the real-time coverage site for the National Angus Conference and Tour. Provided by Angus Productions Inc. (API), the site is sponsored by AgriLabs and Titanium® vaccines.

to get operators to participate. For instance, in South Dakota, premises ID is a requirement if producers want to participate in the state's new start-up branded beef program, South Dakota Certified Beef.

Some third-party vendors are also preparing for their roles in assisting with the implementation of national animal ID. In late September, Kansas Farm Bureau announced that it had launched a new member service for animal ID and information management called Agriculture Solutions. The new service is aimed to help members collect individual animal information and ultimately comply with regulatory ID programs, says Steve Baccus, president of the Kansas Farm Bureau.

He adds that the organization's goal is to connect farmers and ranchers with a service provider and assist them with the transition to a national animal ID system.