



The Source

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No NAIS, What now?

For the 64% of producers who chose not to participate in the voluntary system, the Feb. 5, 2010, announcement that the struggling National Animal Identification System (NAIS) would undergo a major overhaul may not be a big surprise.

During the NAIS listening tour and online comment period, the vast majority of comments received were highly critical. Among the concerns voiced by producers were confidentiality, liability, cost, privacy and religion. To date more than \$120 million has been spent on existing animal disease traceability framework. With so much money spent, minimal participation and heated opposition, a change to a more flexible, lower-cost, less-burdensome system was inevitable.

The USDA is moving forward to develop a system that is flexible and lets the states, Tribal Nations and producers use their expertise to find and use the animal disease traceability approaches that work best for them. The USDA's role will be to provide support and to ensure

animal disease traceability standards are defined, measurable and well-documented.

The intent of the new approach is to:

- Achieve basic, effective animal disease traceability and response to animal disease outbreaks without overly burdening producers;
- Only apply to animals moving in interstate commerce;
- Be owned, led and administered by state and Tribal Nations with federal support focused entirely on animal disease traceability;
- Allow for maximum flexibility for states, Tribal Nations and producers to work together to find identification (ID) solutions that meet their local needs;
- Encourage the use of lower-cost technology;
- Ensure that animal disease traceability data is owned and maintained at the discretion of the states and Tribal Nations;
- Be less federally intrusive and support producers' request to

operate on principles of personal accountability; and

- Help overcome some of the mistrust caused by NAIS.

For the more than 500,000 people who decided to participate in the voluntary USDA animal disease traceability efforts the announcement is confusing, leaving many with the question, "What now?"

Producers who signed up for the original NAIS by registering their location (premise registration) and who currently use "840" ear tags may continue to do so. Retagging will not be necessary. Information that has been collected using the existing framework will be maintained and used as needed for tracebacks and trace forwards during disease situations.

USDA will still require the use of official ID and location identifiers (premise registration) for program diseases. The 840 radio frequency (electronic) tag will be considered as a first choice, due to ease of testing and recording/reporting information. However, through the new system, other options will be available.

Through AngusSource, Gateway and the recently launched Angus Tag Store, the American Angus Association has made 840 tags available to producers. For now, we will continue to offer these tag options and monitor the

development of the new traceability system.

Producers concerned about confidentiality should note that USDA believes the producer information gathered through animal disease traceability efforts is exempt from provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. USDA intends to continue to work with stakeholders and Congress to thoroughly consider this issue.

USDA has pledged to work with states and Tribal Nations to determine the components of the NAIS that can or should be salvaged. Many elements of the NAIS system can be used if the states and Tribal Nations choose to do so. The strong IT infrastructure, allocator system of premise identification numbers (PINs) and 840 tags are some of the elements that may be adapted to the new system. However, it remains up to the states and Tribal Nations to decide if and how they will be used.

For those producers who voiced their opinions and opposition to the original NAIS, the announcement of the NAIS overhaul is proof that their concerns were heard. What remains to be seen is "what" the new system will look like.

Additional information and a frequently asked questions page that was used to write this article can be found at www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability/.

