



Animal Disease Traceability

Key Takeaways

- Animal Disease Traceability is the mechanism by which the United States tracks and traces animal diseases through the animal agriculture population.
- In March of 2022, after receiving stakeholder input during regional meetings, the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) published a proposed rule titled *The Use of Electronic Identification Eartags as Official Identification in Cattle and Bison*.
- The 2018 Farm Bill established an Animal Disease Prevention and Management Program.
- NCBA hopes to establish EID as the industry standard for individual identification by 2026.

Questions

1. Do you currently utilize EID tags in your operation?
2. If not, what factors keep you from utilizing EID tags?
3. TFBF and AFBF policy support a voluntary national animal identification program, rather than mandatory. Is this still the belief of Tennessee farmers?

Background

Animal agriculture across Tennessee and the nation has been riddled with disease outbreaks over the past few years. Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza was reported in nine different flocks in Tennessee in the past year, the first case of *Theileria orientalis ikeda* was detected in a cattle herd in the summer of 2022, and three horses tested positive for Equine Infectious Anemia in 2021. Now, the impending arrival of African Swine Fever and Foot and Mouth Disease into the United States leaves livestock producers facing an ongoing threat of animal diseases with little to no options for treatment.

These current and impending threats have led to increased demand for Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) efforts from producers, industry, and foreign partners alike. ADT is the mechanism by which the United States tracks and traces animal diseases through the animal agriculture population. ADT was developed by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) in 2013 with the goal of providing rapid and effective response to animal disease outbreaks.

One element of ADT efforts includes increasing the use of electronic identification (EID) eartags in cattle. In March of

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2022, after receiving stakeholder input during regional meetings, APHIS published a proposed rule titled *The Use of Electronic Identification Eartags as Official Identification in Cattle and Bison*. This proposed rule would require all official eartags for cattle and bison to be readable both visually and electronically. Animals subject to the use of these tags include: all cattle and bison 18 months of age or older, all dairy cattle, and cattle and bison used for shows, exhibitions, rodeos, or recreational events. Tennessee Farm Bureau and American Farm Bureau participated in submitting comments regarding this proposed rule, which is awaiting a final rule. The rule will go into effect six months after the final rule is published. In addition, the 2018 Farm Bill established an Animal Disease Prevention and Management Program. This program has 3 pillars:

1. National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank – This bank ensures additional availability and readiness of vaccines, if needed, to control an outbreak of foot and mouth disease (FMD) in the United States. This is a US-specific bank and does not serve as a replacement for the North American Foot and Mouth Disease Vaccine Bank.
2. National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program – This program addresses the increasing risk of the introduction and spread within the United States of animal pests and diseases affecting the economic interests of the livestock and related industries of the United States, including the maintenance and expansion of export markets.
3. National Animal Health Laboratory Network – This network enhances the capability of the USDA Secretary to respond in a timely manner to emerging or existing bioterrorist threats to animal health.

At their convention in early 2023, the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association (NCBA) announced their goal to address disease traceability through the work of their Animal Disease Traceability Working Group. This group is working to pursue an ADT program which is industry driven, maintains producer privacy, equitable to all industry sectors, compatible with common industry practices, operates at the speed of commerce, credible in domestic and international markets, and compatible among states. Using these parameters, NCBA hopes to establish EID as the industry standard for individual identification by 2026.

Policy

Tennessee Farm Bureau

Beef (Partial)

We support the implementation of a voluntary national animal identification program that would enhance disease traceability efforts and, thus, could serve to minimize potential financial damages to producers. Since all segments of the industry will benefit, we believe that all segments should participate in the costs of starting and maintaining such a program. We further believe we should secure the confidentiality of data collected in this program.

American Farm Bureau

308 / Livestock Identification

1. A national animal identification system that facilitates animal disease traceability should be considered a separate and distinct issue from country-of-origin labeling. We favor the continued use of legally recognized traditional methods of permanent identification of livestock for individual ownership.
2. Any new method of livestock identification should only be considered if it is proven equally practical and effective as current methods and is a legally recognized form of proof of ownership in all states having livestock brand law. We urge the USDA to conduct a full cost analysis study of a national

animal identification system program and to publish the details. No action should be mandatory until Congress has published the cost figures and appropriate funding.

3. We support the establishment and implementation of a market-driven voluntary national animal identification system capable of providing support for animal disease control and eradication, and further enhancing export markets for U.S. livestock products. Individual states and/or tribes should have control of the animal ID program, not a private “for profit” company. We support the opportunity for each state to decide the entity controlling their respective animal ID program database. However, in the event of a disease outbreak, the controlling entities must be equipped to communicate and utilize the system to track and trace animals in a timely manner.
4. A cost-effective national system of livestock identification, with adequate cost share among government, industry and producers should be established and regulated by an advisory board of producers, processors and USDA. Any such program must protect producers from liability for acts of others after livestock leaves the producers’ hands, including nuisance suits naming everyone who handled particular livestock.
 - 4.1. We support USDA implementing a comprehensive educational system for producers on the transition from the National Uniform Ear Tagging System (NUES) to an 840-prefix radio frequency identification (RFID) system for nationwide identification requirements for cattle and bison.
5. We support the following guidelines for a livestock identification program:
 - 5.1. The program must be as simple and inexpensive as possible for producers to implement;
 - 5.2. The cost of enhanced animal identification tagging by the federal government should be subsidized by the federal government since the general public is the primary beneficiary of this initiative;
 - 5.3. Producer information shall be confidential and exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA);
 - 5.4. Information shall be made available only to the proper animal health authorities in the event of an animal disease incident. Any unauthorized use shall constitute a felony.
 - 5.5. All imported animals should be permanently identified regarding their country of origin upon entry into the United States;
 - 5.6. Ensuring the security of producer information and respecting the privacy of producers by only collecting data necessary to establish a trace-back system;
 - 5.7. All current animal disease programs should be incorporated into a national animal disease traceability system. Producers should need only one number for all programs; however, due to the voluntary nature of a national animal identification system, an opt-out method should be available to producers at their request;
 - 5.8. Allowing for an exclusion from any government mandated livestock traceability program for cattle under 18 months of age and those going directly from farm to slaughter;
 - 5.9. The development of uniform standards for electronic identification;
 - 5.10. The development and adoption of livestock identification technology which will enhance the implementation of value-based marketing;
 - 5.11. The hot-iron brand identification method as a legal, federally recognized method of permanent identification/proof of ownership in those states that have livestock brand laws;
 - 5.12. Meeting the reasonable identification requirements of foreign trade partners and overseas customers, ensuring the U.S. reputation as a reliable supplier of meat; and
 - 5.13. Producers being able to apply identification tags themselves and not requiring veterinary application.

We oppose the labeling of the U.S. and Canadian cattle herds as one North American herd.