

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2006

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 39 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON LIVESTOCK IDENTIFICATION

SUBJECT MATTER: SUPPORT FOR STATE ANIMAL TRACKING DATABASES

DATES: MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, OCTOBER 12-18, 2006

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The United States Animal Identification Plan and the National Animal Identification Strategic Plan were designed primarily to assist with animal health emergencies. Animal health programs have historically been state, industry, and federal cooperative programs.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) to allow the use of National Animal Identification System (NAIS) cooperative agreement funds for the development, maintenance, and supporting infrastructure for state animal tracking databases, to be administered by state animal health officials.

RESPONSE:

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

We welcome the input of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA), and we appreciate the opportunity to respond. I have asked officials with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to carefully consider the Association's recommendations.

As you indicate, NAIS is a voluntary program at the Federal level, and USDA has no plans to make participation in any NAIS component—including animal identification—mandatory. We believe that the best approach to NAIS is a voluntary system actively shaped by the States, industry, and producers, in partnership with USDA. We respect States' rights, and we recognize that individual States may choose to make participation mandatory, based on local needs. While the Federal NAIS will be voluntary, we are emphasizing the very real benefits to producers of participating in the program. We believe that the marketplace will respond to the animal health benefits and marketing opportunities that NAIS offers, and that we can accomplish our goals through a voluntary program.

At the same time, we believe that authorities and programs already in place can provide valuable support as NAIS moves forward. We are committed to working with you and others to

capitalize on existing brand infrastructure and disease control and eradication programs as we implement NAIS. We look forward to further dialogue with USAHA on these issues.

Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS)

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) appreciates the opportunity to address collaboration efforts regarding the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). The animal tracing component of NAIS is a public/private partnership. Both industry—through private systems—and States will operate and maintain animal identification number (AIN) device distribution databases and animal tracking databases (ATDs), that will contain the animal location and movement records needed to help safeguard animal health.

USDA will operate a portal system (the Animal Trace Processing System [ATPS]) that will enable animal health officials to submit requests for information to the AIN device distribution databases and ATDs when investigating an animal disease event. State and Federal animal health officials will only use this system under the following circumstances:

- An indication (suspect, presumptive positive, etc.) or confirmed positive test of a foreign animal disease;
- An animal disease emergency as determined by the Secretary of Agriculture and/or State Departments of Agriculture; or
- A need to conduct a trace-back or trace-forward to determine the origin of infection for a program disease (brucellosis, tuberculosis, etc.).

This infrastructure supports the USDA's position on maintaining only essential data within the Federal government, thereby avoiding information disclosure through the Freedom of Information Act.

Funding ATDs through cooperative agreements would compromise USDA's positions and objectives on the successful implementation of the NAIS since Federal funding for ATD development would make the information in the ATDs subject to FOIA, even if held outside the government; therefore we are unable to support this resolution.