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The National Animal Identification System
Sheep Working Group Report
“Executive Summary”
9/06/06

Current Status and Principles of Sheep Identification

The US sheep industry already has a *mandatory* ID Federal/State cooperative ID system required by the National Scrapie Eradication Program (NSEP) instituted in September 2001.

A share of the cost of NAIS will need to be born by the public sector in order to achieve compliance. Continue with the current cost-sharing approach to a national sheep identification system.

- Responsibility of the producer includes the identification device placement as well as the mandated record-keeping and retrieval. Producer-provided sheep handling systems are a necessary component for device placement.
- Responsibility of state and federal government would continue to include infrastructure support at the state and federal levels to allocate premises numbers, place tag orders, distribute tags, and maintenance of the database that houses the above information.
- Electronic identification could be an option when the technology of electronic identification is further developed. The market structure needed to utilize electronic identification and download/upload data must be supported in a cost-sharing approach between all affected parties.

Continued research funds are needed to further develop and field test industry-friendly methods of electronic identification or other technology in sheep to enhance animal tracking at points of commingling.

Recording and reporting of movement data will need to be simple with options that are computer-based, fax-based and/or telephone-based.

Premises Allocation System:

The existing premises (Scrapie flock ID number) and flock assignment system works well the current NSEP ear tag distribution system.

The Scrapie flock ID will be matched with the NAIS premises ID (PIN) in the database.

NAIS Premises numbers should have either O, I or Q or 0 and 1 but not both.

Tag Distribution:

The existing ear tag distribution system works well. Approved tag manufacturers distribute tags. The tag order is sent to the authorized tag source with the correct Scrapie flock number. The

tags are then imprinted and drop-shipped direct to the producer. This system appears to be working to the satisfaction of producers in terms of timing, accuracy and service. It is felt that increasing the number of sources (i.e., retail stores, etc.) would increase the risk of errors in both distribution and database entry.

Animal Identification: Individual

The Scrapie ID system is necessarily a visual-based tracking system for animals that is supplemented by the use of records of ownership, registry recordation, and movement.

The current visual identification system for breeding stock is adequate for the Scrapie program and is the best technology has to offer at this time for individual sheep identification systems in general.

NSEP Visual and electronic (voluntary) sheep tags are issued (printed) with the individual animal management number and the Scrapie Flock ID number – ***combined they are a unique number***. An APHIS-approved eartag or tattoo bearing the scrapie flock number, which consists of the State postal zip code abbreviation followed by a unique alphanumeric number.

Replacing the existing numbers with the '840' number would result in an unacceptable number transcription error rate. ***If*** the '840' number is required we suggest not imprinting the country code "840" on the visual tag portion of official visual and RFID eartags since the presence of the US shield already indicates this.

Standards for sheep electronic ear tags will be developed as an electronic ID system is discovered, defined and tested and found to work reliably and efficiently at a realistic price. The SWG would require the following data to assess the devices' acceptability for the National Animal ID system for sheep are:

- Longevity of the device, will it work for the life of the animal.
- Retention and recovery of the device, will the sheep retain it, will it migrate, fall out or easily tear out, etc. and at slaughter can the device be recovered easily.
- Readability (slow and high-speed throughput).
- Dual purpose use for management and regulatory traceability.
- Ear reaction & infection – Ear tags depending on the climate of the region, age at placement, placement site, and ear tag design have a tendency to cause reactions and infections in the sheep's ear.
- Database retrieval and security.

Software needs to be developed that will allow the electronic ID to be downloaded into different software programs. It will need to interact/ upload to relevant databases, however, for these devices to be readily accepted by the sheep industry as whole, the data should be accessible by different software programs.

For industry personnel who do not own/use computers, there will have to be alternate methods to transmit the required records to the relevant databases (fax or phone-in system). Along with

industry personnel who do not own/use computers, there are a variety of exhibitions where collecting the required animal data on the exhibition premises would ensure compliance. Conceivably a wireless device that collects and downloads to the appropriate databases could be used in these instances.

Group/Lot Identification

For slaughter and feeder sheep (all sheep under 18 months of age and not designated as breeding animals), an individual ID system that is based upon visually read ear tags for tracking would not be suitable for accomplishing 48-hour traceability. Requiring individual identification of feeder and slaughter lambs would place an undue burden upon industry.

Group/lot-based premises identification for,

- slaughter and feeder sheep,
- ewes with lambs moving interstate without change of ownership or commingling, and
- intrastate movement for grazing purposes with commingling of slaughter and feeder lambs only

A group/lot of feeder and slaughter sheep would be defined as 10 or more animals.

- The GIN numbering system would be consistent with that proposed in NAIS
 - a 15 digit, producer-generated number that would be comprised of the seven digit NAIS premises number,
 - the six digit date that the group was assembled, and
 - 01 at the end meaning that it was the first group assembled on that date, etc.
- GIN records will be maintained and retained by the owner for a period of five years after the group is retired. Records will include:
 - Animal additions (source PIN, date entered, number of head);
 - Animal removals (date, reason for removal);
 - Destination (PIN);
 - Inventory reconciliation.
- These production records will be made available to USDA when warranted by a significant animal health event.
- The person sending the group assigns the GIN, but the receiving premises reports the group's physical arrival to NAIS. Note that once the group enters the feeding channels, normal practices and records will keep track of the group to the extent practical. When the animals leave the feeding site, they are given a new GIN which would be reported at the packing plant. This approach is scientifically sound for diseases of concern to sheep. The sheep working group thinks that if a Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) exposed sheep is traced back to a feedlot (or slaughter or grazing movement), further action will not be altered whether the sheep was traced using individual ID or a group/lot ID. All of the animals in the feedlot would have to be considered potentially exposed, regardless of

whether you could identify the individual animal that you are tracing. The sheep working group believes that the NAIS program should be designed for real risks such as FMD and not every ‘what-if’ scenario.

- Group/Lot ID permitted for movement of breeding sheep for management purposes where there is NO change of ownership. This would apply to either intrastate movements or interstate movements. This class of sheep is currently exempt from Scrapie ID requirements. The reporting requirements for interstate movement would be the same as described for feedlot and slaughter sheep.
- Sexually intact sheep could only be pulled out of groups/lots for breeding purposes if they had official ID indicating premises of origin identification.
- All exhibition animals will continue to be individually identified, this includes wethers.

Event Protocols

The types of animal movements that must be monitored will closely follow the current movements that are monitored because of Scrapie regulations.

The list below indicates which movements will require the animals to have official identification. The biggest risk occurs when animals from different premises gather and concentrate or commingle.

- A. Interstate Movement, whether there is a change of ownership or not, need to have official individual identification except for the following which will have ;
 - Group/Lot ID for animals moving for grazing or other management purposes without a change of ownership.
 - Group/Lot ID for animals less than 18-months old in slaughter channels.
 - The type of documentation for these movements should be the same that is required by current Scrapie regulations. The sheep owner or the person applying the tags and the person receiving the animals would be required to keep records of this movement for 5 years. Any intermediate handlers would keep their normal type of business records for five years.
- B. Group/Lot for intrastate movement, without change of ownership for grazing purposes.
- C. Intrastate Movement, with change of ownership, would require official ID and the same record keeping described for Interstate Movement.
- D. Exhibitions. All animals need official individual ID. Record keeping requirements include Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI). All records of the animals exhibited in these shows must be kept by fairs for five years and shall be made available to USDA, APHIS, VS to allow for a forty-eight hour trace back in case of any disease threat.

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