

# OPINION

## Animal ID stands still



### College Farmer

By Katie Allen

#### Key Points

- National Animal Identification System is voluntary.
- Premises registration is the first step to following the NAIS.
- Weigh costs of implementing animal ID in your herd or flock.

THREE years ago, I wrote a story for one of my freshman college classes. The story was about a new national animal identification system, and it included information about the program, concerns of livestock producers and predictions from animal officials that a mandatory identification program for our livestock was coming soon — and we had better be ready for it.

According to USDA, the National Animal Identification System, or NAIS, is meant to protect the health of livestock and poultry within the country and effectively trace an animal to its farm of origin within 48 hours of a disease outbreak. This includes tracing the animals involved in the disease outbreak, where the infected animals had been and what other animals were exposed to the disease.

The purpose of the program has not changed since I wrote that story. And after three years of speaking with livestock producers about the program, I think their thoughts are equally as consistent — give us the tools and resources to make our own decisions, and keep animal ID voluntary.

#### Slow progress

Premises registration is the first step in the NAIS. Through premises registration, a unique ID number is assigned to locations where animals are born, managed, marketed or exhibited. While registering a location is free, tags or other forms of identification dip into the producer's pocket.

As livestock producers, we

hear about animal identification and realize it's an option to pursue. It's easy enough to register online and find out more about identifying our specific livestock on the Web, but I'm concerned that in this new age of technology, some producers are getting left out. The NAIS is at a standstill, and some of the same concerns brought to mind in my first story about animal ID are still viable today.

When I studied the program in its early stages, a huge concern among producers was making animal identification consistent while using methods suitable for different livestock species. Livestock groups of various species have come forward with ideas on what they would like to see in an animal ID program. Missouri livestock groups are no different.

#### Workable programs

The Missouri Cattlemen's Association has implemented a voluntary source- and age-verified program for cattle called the MCA-SAV program. The program allows MCA members who have registered their premises with the Missouri Department of Agriculture to purchase a pair of tags for each calf produced on their farm.

The tags include an electronic identification device, or EID, that can easily identify that calf's farm of origin. The tags can be purchased through MCA and its dealer-partners and give producers an opportunity to receive a premium at markets for their source- and age-verified group of calves.

Like MCA, many other livestock groups have partnered with MDA in developing an animal ID program suitable to their industries.

Gov. Matt Blunt addressed his intention to work with livestock producers on animal identification and keep the system voluntary at both the MCA Convention in December and the MDA's Governor's Conference in January. Some officials still believe the program will only fulfill its purpose when everyone is required to participate.

Producers need to do their homework and decide if the input costs of implementing an animal ID program would benefit their operation. It might be worth the effort to register their premises while it is free and voluntary.

To find out more about animal ID, go to USDA's Web site, [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov), or MDA's Web site, [www.mda.mo.gov](http://www.mda.mo.gov). Or, call the MDA Animal ID Program at 573-751-7766.

*Allen is a University of Missouri ag journalism student. E-mail her at [klagkc@mizzou.edu](mailto:klagkc@mizzou.edu). This is the first of a two-part series on animal ID. More ID statistics will be featured in the March College Farmer.*



## Voluntary premises ID update

MISSOURI lags behind many states when it comes to signing up for premises identification of livestock operations. Only 17.7% of livestock producers have registered their premises with the Missouri Animal Identification Program, which is the first step in establishing a national animal identification system, according to the Missouri Department of Agriculture.

A voluntary program, MAIP assigns a unique identification number to locations where animals are born, managed, marketed or exhibited. MDA and USDA authorities use information gathered through premises registration solely for animal health purposes.

MAIP was developed through funding provided by USDA in an effort to coordinate the National Animal Identification System capable of tracing a sick animal or group of animals back to the herd or premises of origin. MDA has been working with USDA since 2002 to develop this program to identify all animals and premises that have had direct contact with a disease of concern within 48 hours after discovery.

For more information, call Greg Onstott, MAIP specialist, at 573-751-7766, or e-mail [greg.onstott@mda.mo.gov](mailto:greg.onstott@mda.mo.gov). — Jerilyn Johnson

## New ID in '07

TOP 10 states registering new premises in 2007:

1. Iowa — 9,499
2. Texas — 6,797
3. Massachusetts — 6,381
4. Indiana — 6,181
5. North Carolina — 6,044
6. New York — 5,972
7. Nebraska — 5,629
8. Wisconsin — 5,446
9. Illinois — 5,225
10. Ohio — 4,205

## State stats on premises ID

HERE are the latest Missouri statistics on livestock premises registration, according to a Jan. 15 USDA report.

■ Missouri has an estimated 79,018 premises, ranking second in the nation.

■ As of Jan. 15, livestock producers have registered 13,961 premises (17.7%).

■ Missouri ranks 29th nationally in percent of premises registered.

■ A total of 2,002 new premises were registered in Missouri in 2007 (16.7% increase).

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