



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

JUN 25 2007

Dr. R. M. Thornsberry
President, R-CALF USA Board of Directors
R-CALF United Stockgrowers of America
Post Office Box 30715
Billings, Montana 59107

Dear Dr. Thornsberry:

Thank you for your letter of May 30, 2007, concerning Department of Agriculture (USDA) procedures for removing premises registration information from the National Animal Identification System (NAIS).

USDA continues to believe that the best approach to NAIS is a voluntary system at the Federal level, and we certainly appreciate the support many have shown for the program by registering their premises. Having what amounts to an emergency contact list will help us respond quickly when an animal health emergency arises. However, as we have emphasized in previous communications with your organization, the choice to participate in premises registration at the Federal level—including the choice to discontinue participation after the premises has been registered—continues to rest with the producer. In this regard, we must clarify that USDA has not mandated NAIS participation for members of 4-H, the National FFA Organization (formerly known as the Future Farmers of America), or any other individuals or organizations. The NAIS requirements 4-H groups and FFA include in their programs are their choice alone.

As you note, USDA has established a process to accommodate producer requests to remove premises registration information from NAIS. In doing so, we strived to make the process as simple and straightforward as possible. The contact person of the premises needs only to submit a written request to the State animal health authority and include the premises information (i.e., premises identification number, contact name, and premises address). The State will process the request and inform the contact person of the premises registration removal when it is completed. Contact information for each State's animal health authority is available on USDA's NAIS Web site at http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/contact_us/directories.shtml.

We hope this information clarifies USDA's position on these issues. We look forward to working with you as we continue to implement the NAIS.

Sincerely,

for Bruce I. Knight
Under Secretary
Marketing and Regulatory Programs