

APHIS Statement on Animal Disease Traceability

Last April, APHIS posted a factsheet to provide producers with information about the Agency's guidelines and goals related to Animal Disease Traceability. Since the Factsheet was posted, APHIS has listened to the livestock industry's feedback. In light of these comments and current Executive Branch policy, APHIS believes that we should revisit those guidelines. APHIS has removed the Factsheet from its Web site, as it is no longer representative of current agency policy.

Recent executive orders have highlighted the need for transparency and communication on the issues set forth in the Factsheet before placing any new requirements on American farmers and ranchers. *See* Executive Orders 13891 and 13892. Consistent with these orders, APHIS has decided not to implement the requirements outlined in the April 2019 Factsheet regarding the type of identification devices that USDA-APHIS will regard as official eartags and the dates by which they must be applied to cattle.

While the need to advance a robust joint Federal-State-Industry Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) capability remains an important USDA-APHIS objective, we will take the time to reconsider the path forward and then make a new proposal, with ample opportunity for all stakeholders to comment.

As we undertake this reconsideration of whether or when to put new requirements in place, we will encourage the use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) devices through financial incentives that are also consistent with suggestions we have received from cow/calf producers and others. We continue to believe that RFID devices will provide the cattle industry with the best protection against the rapid spread of animal diseases, as well as meet the growing expectations of foreign and domestic buyers.

It is important to note that despite any future actions USDA-APHIS may take regarding official identification devices, the underlying ADT regulations apply only to sexually intact beef animals over 18 months of age moving in interstate commerce, cattle used for exhibition, rodeo and recreational events, and all dairy cattle. **Those regulations permit brands and tattoos as acceptable identification if the shipping and receiving States agree.**

USDA's goals to enhance Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) have not changed; our aim is to:

- Encourage the use of electronic identification for animals that move interstate under the current ADT regulation;
- Enhance electronic sharing of basic animal disease traceability data;
- Enhance the ability to track animals from birth to slaughter; and

- Increase the use of electronic health certificates