

*Fighting for the U.S. Cattle Producer!*



**R-CALF**  
**USA**

**R-CALF United Stockgrowers of America**  
P.O. Box 30715  
Billings, MT 59107  
Fax: 406-252-3176  
Phone: 406-252-2516  
Website: [www.r-calfusa.com](http://www.r-calfusa.com)  
E-mail: [r-calfusa@r-calfusa.com](mailto:r-calfusa@r-calfusa.com)

---

August 3, 2009

The Honorable Jon Tester  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**Sent Via E-mail**

**RE: R-CALF USA Support of the Tester Amendment to Reduce Funding for the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) in the 2010 Agriculture Appropriations Bill**

Dear Senator Tester:

On behalf of its thousands of cattle-producing members, R-CALF USA strongly supports your amendment – the Tester Amendment – that would reduce funding for the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) in the 2010 Agriculture Appropriations bill. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) NAIS program epitomizes what government should not do. Government should not impose costly and highly intrusive regulatory burdens on private industry and private citizens without first considering alternatives; without first establishing a critical public need; and without first determining the effect that a significant government mandate would have on the culture and economy of the U.S. livestock industry.

Unfortunately, USDA has already expended approximately \$140 million on NAIS without first explaining why its preexisting and historically successful disease prevention, control and eradication programs, such as its brucellosis, bovine tuberculosis, and sheep scrapie disease programs, cannot be enhanced to enable the agency to accomplish its statutory mandate to prevent the introduction and spread of animal diseases and pests.

The agency has likewise proceeded to implement NAIS without establishing the epidemiological significance or benefit of achieving the agency's stated goal of tracing disease suspects to their herds of origin within 48 hours. This arbitrary timeframe would not appear to prevent the spread of diseases with long incubation periods, such as bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) or bovine tuberculosis. Nor would it appear to prevent the spread of diseases that incubate very quickly, such as foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), which would necessitate more immediate containment actions to prevent disease spread beyond an infected animal.

But perhaps most important, USDA has pursued NAIS without working in cooperation with the very industry sector that would be directly impacted by the agency's radical new proposal. Instead, USDA has proceeded to implement NAIS despite overwhelming opposition

The Honorable Jon Tester

August 3, 2009

Page 2

from the men and women who comprise our U.S. livestock industry, and particularly from those involved in the largest segment of our livestock industry – the U.S. cattle industry. As evidenced by USDA’s numerous listening sessions held throughout the U.S., this overwhelming opposition arises from those individuals who have the greatest stake in ensuring that our livestock herds remain protected from the introduction and spread of disease – the individuals whose very livelihoods and businesses are dependent on preventing, controlling and eradicating diseases. This, above all else, should demonstrate to Congress that USDA’s NAIS program is wholly inappropriate and unsuitable for the United States livestock industry.

For the foregoing reasons, we strongly support your Tester Amendment that would reduce funding for NAIS in the 2010 Agriculture Appropriations bill. We view your amendment as an essential step towards requiring USDA to begin cooperating with U.S. livestock producers to prevent the introduction and spread of animal diseases and pests in livestock *without* violating the rights and privileges of the individual owners and caretakers of those livestock.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. M. Thornsberry DVM". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

R.M. (Max) Thornsberry, D.V.M.  
R-CALF USA President of the Board