



CEDAR GROVE VETERINARY SERVICE NEWSLETTER



DECEMBER 2019

ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION: TIME TO TRANSITION FROM METAL TAGS TO RFID

Cattle identification is very important on every farm. It allows farmers a way to identify cows that need to be treated for disease or to be bred or are due to calve. Identification is also important since most farms are too big for a farmer to remember all the cows by appearance alone. Solutions to identifying cattle ranges from brands, tattoos, back tags, paint stick marks, metal ear tags, basic plastic ear tags and RFID tags.

Even though cow identification on farms is usually a no-brainer, the harder task is for the industry to agree upon a national standardized system that is capable of tracing all cattle back to their prior locations within 48 hours. The first big push for a National ID program for cattle began over two decades ago. However, a reliable national ID program has yet to be realized. The federal government is now hoping that changes coming in 2020 for cattle identification will finally be a step in the right direction.

So why would the cattle industry strive for a National ID

program for cattle in the first place? The simple answer is safety and economic stability. The agricultural industry in the United States contributes about 13% to the gross annual domestic product. The United States Department of Agriculture reported that the cash receipts for livestock, poultry, and crops exceeds \$200 billion dollars annually. However, globalization has increased the risk of terrorism. The US is very concerned about the vulnerability of plant and animal agriculture in the United States. The deliberate introduction of a pathogen (fungus, bacterium, virus, or insect pest) into U.S. livestock, poultry, or crops could cause a disease outbreak. The outcome of an outbreak could be devastating, resulting in loss of livestock, disruption of animal agriculture industry and decreased food production. This would drive food prices up, halt valuable exports, and ultimately cost taxpayers billions of dollars in lost revenue and industry renewal costs.

Twas The Night Before Christmas-Cow Version

Twas the Night Before Christmas and all
through the farm pens,
Not a creature was stirring not even the hens.
The stockings were hung in the parlor with care,
With hopes that St. Nicholas soon would be
there.
The heifers were snuggled up warm in their
shed,
While visions of silage bales danced in their
heads.
The calves were all cozy and the bull with his
horns,
Would be snoring and dreaming straight
through till dawn.
When out in the yard there arose such a din,
They all sprang to their feet to see what was
happ'ning.
To the gate they stumbled still half asleep,
Stuck their heads through the bars and had a
good peek
New fallen snow on the ground did lie,
But other than that there was nothing to spy.
When suddenly out of the snow did appear
A whopping great sleigh and a heap of
reindeer
The little old driver wasn't lively or quick,
But they knew from his suit that this must be St.
Nick.
Less nimble than usual he fell to the ground,
And cursed the reindeer that were scattered
around.
"Ow Dasher, Ow Dancer, Ow Comet and
Vixen!
Bad Prancer, Bad Cupid, Silly Donner and
Blitzen
Eight reindeer leading and not one sees a wall!
Now how are we meant to dash away all?"
Then Santa spotted the cows in a row,
And his once frowning face lit up with a glow!
With his question he sprang with a leap and a
bound,
"How do you Cows fancy Leaving the ground?"
A twinkle in his eye Santa opened the gate,
And into the snow went the black and white
eight.
"No time for nerves, there is work to be done,
but please do not fret, we'll have loads of fun!"
Each cow was harnessed and hitched to the
sleigh
with Bronco the bull proudly leading the way.
With some Christmas magic they'd soon be in
flight,
Delivering presents all through the night.



While this may sound like a fantastical scenario out of a science fiction novel, it is a very real threat. It has happened before in other parts of the world. During World War II, Britain accused Germans of dropping potato beetles on cropland to disrupt production. Israel has sprayed pesticides on grapes in Palestine in order to disrupt a major agriculture crop leading to destabilization of the economy.

Even if Ag terrorism wasn't a real threat, tracking disease in livestock is a very important tool when it comes to non-nefarious disease outbreaks. The Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in the United Kingdom in 2001 is a great example. That outbreak initiated in swine, but spread to nearby sheep flocks, which showed very few clinical signs but were able to spread the virus to other animals. The outbreak was not officially detected for 2 to 3 weeks. As a result of this delay, many animals were exposed, and the virus was widely disseminated. Tracking potentially infected animals in the United Kingdom proved to be a grueling task due to inadequate identification and records of movement. The outbreak halted export of animals and animal products from the entire country, and over 10,400 farms were affected, requiring the slaughter and disposal of 4.2 million animals. Direct government cost to contain the outbreak was \$5 billion, with

losses from tourism estimated at \$3.6 to 7.2 billion. In the US, there has been sporadic cattle that have tested positive for BSE/Mad cow disease. These, fortunately, have devastated the industry, yet.

Therefore, there are many good reasons that a National ID program is a good idea for the US. Below are the anticipated changes that the government is making in the next few years.

The first change will be that the USDA will discontinue providing free metal tags at the end of 2019. Veterinary clinics will be able to use any that they may still have, but after that they will have to be purchased through outside vendors. Approved vendors will still be able to produce official metal tags for one year. This includes both the plain metal tags and brucellosis tags. In order to write vaccination slips for cattle vaccinated for brucellosis/bangs in the future, they will need to have official 840 RFID tags.

On January 1, 2021, the USDA will no longer approve the production of metal ear tags with the official USDA shield. In addition, accredited veterinarians and/or producers can no longer apply metal tags for official identification and must start using official RFID ear tags when official identification is required for forms.

Finally, On January 1, 2023, RFID tags will be required for cattle moving interstate, and animals previously tagged with metal ear

tags will have to be retagged with RFID tags. The only exceptions will be feeder cattle and male dairy cattle born before March 11, 2013.

Therefore, it will be best for any producers that are anticipating continuing with brucellosis vaccinations or planning interstate movement of cattle in the future to switch to the official 840 RFID tags. Doing this earlier rather than later will allow farmers to keep operating as normal.

To purchase official 840 RFID tags, producers must first obtain a premise identification number (PIN) from their state's Department of Agriculture. If there are any questions about these changes, feel free to contact your veterinarian. Below are some resources for help in obtaining a PIN:

<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/traceability/state-pin/>



Dairy Farming Knowledge Answers

1) D

2) B

3) D

