

A New Way Ahead For Animal Disease Traceability Livestock Farmers Take Note Of This New System (Submitted by APHIS for the Southern Cooperator)

Safeguarding the health of America's livestock is a major responsibility of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). In addition to preventing disease, a cornerstone of APHIS' efforts is animal disease traceability—that is, the ability to trace where a sick animal was exposed to a disease and quickly stop the disease from spreading. Traceability not only helps protect producers' livelihoods; it also gives our trading partners added confidence in American agricultural products and helps ensure that the American people have a safe and wholesome food supply.

APHIS has been working for a number of years to create a traceability program that will meet producer preferences and has been reaching out to thousands of people—small farmers and other producers, industry groups, Tribes, and State officials—to hear their views on the best way forward. Based on this feedback, APHIS has developed a new plan for an effective traceability system that will be easier for producers to follow. Cattle are the priority because the biggest gaps in being able to trace animal disease lie within the cattle sector. The plan for the new traceability system has been developed in cooperation with producers' groups. The plan is available on APHIS' Web site (www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability), is called "New Way Ahead for ADT.docx" and will become officially available to the public for comment in the near future.

The new system will apply only to animals that are moved between States. Animals that are being transported interstate to a custom slaughter plant to process for personal consumption are exempt from the new regulations. The system will be owned, led, and administered by the States and Tribal Nations. Among other things, that means that traceability information collected from producers—such as premises data—will be maintained however the States and Tribes see fit. The new system will also encourage the use of low-cost identification eartags.

How the new rules may apply to you depends on what kinds of animals you raise and if you move them to other States. Here are a few examples:

CATTLE: The draft traceability regulations will require cattle being moved interstate to be officially identified—with some exceptions—and to be accompanied by an Interstate Certificate

of Veterinary Inspection or other movement documentation. To avoid potential market disruptions and record-keeping issues, the beef industry will be phased in gradually over time. For example, the new requirements will only begin to apply to feeder cattle once APHIS determines that the new system is running smoothly for the adult breeding animal sector.

POULTRY: There may be some changes for poultry producers, depending on local practices. Official identification will be defined in the draft regulation, with the States and Tribes determining when those methods or others are best suited for the movement of such animals. Poultry is often identified through group or lot identification.

SHEEP AND GOATS: For sheep and goat producers, nothing will change under the new traceability regulations: requirements will remain the same as for APHIS' Scrapie Eradication Program. All States and Tribes will continue to recognize USDA-issued eartags as official identification. Producers will still be able to use tattoos, radio frequency identification, or brands for the types of sheep and goat movements

for which those methods are currently allowed. Producers can obtain free USDA metal or plastic eartags and applicators—and obtain information on which sheep/goats are required to have identification—by calling toll-free (866) 873-2824.

SWINE: Nothing will actually change for swine producers under the new traceability regulations, because swine moved interstate must already be officially identified to comply with existing regulations.

HORSES: The draft traceability regulations will define official methods for identifying horses and other equines. These methods will include typical practices currently used in the equine industry, such as color marking, brands, tattoos, and other technologies.

More information on the new draft animal disease traceability system, including a comprehensive report and implementation plan, is available at www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability.

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Photo above: Federation staff Jackie Ward at Georgia farmer Cornelius Key's farm for livestock demonstration during 2010 Albany Farmers Conference.

