

# National Animal Identification System: Goal and Vision

The goal of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) is to be able to identify all animals and premises that have had contact with a foreign or domestic animal disease of concern within 48 hours after discovery. As an information system that provides for rapid tracing of infected and exposed animals during an outbreak situation, the NAIS will help limit the scope of such outbreaks and ensure that they are contained and eradicated as quickly as possible.

Partnerships among all stakeholders are the foundation for achieving this tremendously important and extremely challenging goal.

## The Key Components

The NAIS will be established over time through the integration of these key components:

- **Premises Identification**

To track animals, we must know where they are born and where they are moved. Therefore, identifying locations that manage or hold animals—referred to as premises—is the starting point of the NAIS. Each premises will be identified with a unique seven character identifier, or a premises identification number.

- **Animal Identification**

To track animals as they move from premises to premises, we must also have a standard way to identify them. Animals will be identified either individually with a unique animal identification number (AIN) or, if they are managed and moved through the production chain as a group, with a Group/Lot Identification Number (Group/Lot ID).

- **Animal Tracking**

As animals move from one premises to another, a few basic pieces of information will be reported to the national animal's records repository: the AIN or Group/Lot ID, the premises number of the receiving location, and the date of the animal's or animals' arrival. Our ability to achieve the 48-hour traceback objective will be directly affected by the percentage of animal movements that we are able to record. Collecting animal movement information is possibly the most challenging component of the NAIS.

## NAIS Guiding Principles

To achieve the 48-hour traceback goal, USDA believes the system must follow several core guiding principles that include the following:

- **Uniformity**—The NAIS will be based on national data standards to ensure that a uniform and compatible system evolves throughout the United States. The program will support all needs of official identification, including animal disease programs and interstate commerce.

- **Flexibility**—The NAIS must allow producers to use NAIS in coordination with production management systems, marketing incentives, etc., allowing for the transition to a “one number—one animal” system for disease control programs and other industry-administered programs. While animals must be identified prior to being moved from their current premises, producers can decide whether to identify their stock at birth or during other management practices.

The integration of animal identification technology standards (electronic identification, retinal scan, DNA, etc.) will be determined by industry to ensure the most practical options are implemented and that new ones can easily be incorporated into the NAIS.

- **Inclusiveness**—The NAIS is being developed to identify animals and poultry and record their movements over the course of their lifespans. The ultimate goal is to create an effective, uniform national animal tracking system that will help maintain the health of U.S. herds and flocks. Currently, working groups are developing plans for camelids (llamas and alpacas), cattle and bison, cervids (deer and elk), equine, goats, poultry, sheep, and swine.

The NAIS is voluntary so producers and other stakeholders can participate in the design, development, and testing of the system to ensure practical solutions evolve. To achieve the goal of 48-hour tracebacks, all producers and affected industry segments must eventually participate. [If the market does not provide incentives for participation in the NAIS, it may be necessary to establish requirements for identifying premises and animals and for reporting animal movements. These requirements would ensure essential data are available for animal health officials to carry out timely tracebacks.]

- **Cooperation**—The NAIS is a joint effort. Successful achievement of the 48-hour traceback goal will occur through State, Federal, and industry partnerships. While animal health authorities have significant responsibilities, it is important to ensure that this effort does not unduly increase the size and scope of Federal or State governments.

Both public and private funding will be required for the NAIS to become fully operational. The Federal government is providing the standards and the national databases and basic infrastructure. States and Tribes will register premises within their areas. They will also support the administration of animal identification and tracking systems that will feed information into the national databases. Producers will identify their animals and provide necessary records to the databases. Marketers and processing plants will provide animal location records. Service providers and third parties will assist through their animal identification and management programs by providing animal identification and movement records to the NAIS on behalf of their producer clients. Labor from all groups will be needed.

- **Confidentiality**—The NAIS will contain only information necessary for animal health officials to be able to track suspect animals and identify any other animals that may have been exposed to a disease. To ensure that officials have immediate, reliable, and uninterrupted access to this information in the event of a disease concern, certain basic data must be readily available to the Federal government.

Animal identification and tracking systems maintained by the States or regional alliances will be an integral part of the overall NAIS information infrastructure. The State and regional systems will be able to collect and maintain more information than is required for the NAIS, yet only the required data need to be available for the national animal records repository.

To help assure participants that the information will be used only for animal health purposes, the information must be confidential. USDA and its State partners will work to protect data confidentiality.

## Additional Information

Learn more about the NAIS at  
<http://www.usda.gov/nais>.

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