



News Release

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National Food Animal Identification Task Force Established

The National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) has announced the formation of a task force to facilitate the advancement of animal identification in the United States.

The National Food Animal Identification Task Force was established in April and held its first teleconference meeting in May. Task Force members will gather in Chicago in June where six working groups of the task force will meet and discuss various aspects of a national plan.

According to Neil Hammerschmidt, COO of the Wisconsin Livestock Identification Consortium and chair NIAA's Animal Identification and Information Systems Committee, the mission of the task force is "to ensure the United States has an adequate animal identification system that supports the financial viability of animal agriculture."

"This stakeholder-based task force has the challenge to collectively develop a national identification plan that provides the essential elements of a national program," said Hammerschmidt, "that can be implemented timely and cost effectively."

Hammerschmidt said the task force is a unified effort involving industry and government. More than 25 industry organizations and a few government agencies have accepted NIAA's invitation to participate on the task force. In all, more than 75 individuals are serving on the various working groups.

Hammerschmidt points out that several animal identification work groups and entities have made significant progress during the past year. "The intent of this task force is not to duplicate such efforts, but to incorporate them into a broad plan that provides greater opportunity for a national program," he said. "The vast leadership coming to grips with the key issues across the entire industry is what makes this effort outstanding." The issue-based working groups are co-chaired by 10 industry leaders throughout animal agriculture.

Dr. Mark Engle with the National Pork Board, who vice chairs the NIAA Animal Identification and Information Systems Committee, said the task force will present a preliminary report during **ID/INFO EXPO 2002**, a conference and trade show devoted to the issue of animal identification and information systems. During this event, scheduled for July 28 - Aug. 1, the National Food Animal Identification Symposium will provide a forum to advance the national plan for animal identification and consider the recommendations of the task force.

After feedback is collected from the symposium, Engle said, the task force will meet again and consider

any revisions before presenting their final recommendations for a national plan at the U.S. Animal Health Association meeting scheduled for October in St. Louis.

Hammerschmidt and Engle's goal is to have a national plan defined by the end of the year.

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Sidebar -

National Food Animal Identification Task Force Charge

1. Determine the immediate needs for animal identification and acknowledge the possible long-term requirements.
2. Define a minimal identification system that can successfully address the issues needing immediate action while accounting for flexibility to expand its capabilities to meet anticipated needs of the future.
3. Coordinate efforts among various industry working groups/committees working on animal identification issues.
4. Develop a draft plan for review and discussion at NIAA ID Symposium and finalize plan for presentation at USAHA 2002 Annual Meeting.
5. Finalize an implementation plan.