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Industry to Offer Input on USDA's New Framework for Animal Disease Traceability

COLORADO SPRINGS, CO – Following USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack's announcement that his department is changing its approach to developing a national animal identification system, the National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) has announced it will dedicate a portion of its annual meeting, to be held in Kansas City, MO March 15-17, to having industry representatives and participants offer needed input to State and Tribal officials as they begin the task of developing identification programs that will be compatible across state and tribal boundaries.

As announced on Feb. 5th, the USDA is changing its course from developing a national system to providing the "framework for animal disease traceability" in which States and Tribes will determine their own specific programs and, presumably, their own standards. As part of the announcement Sec. Vilsack indicated State and Tribal animal health officials will hold a two-day forum in Kansas City March 18-19 to initiate a dialogue about the possible ways of achieving the flexible, coordinated approach to animal disease traceability USDA envisions.

Immediately preceding the forum, the NIAA Animal Identification and Information Systems Committee is convening a panel of animal agriculture representatives to discuss what this new approach will mean to their sector of the industry as well as offer input to the State and Tribal officials to incorporate into their later discussions.

"The USDA's announcement that it will no longer pursue the NAIS strategy is something that has left many in animal agriculture asking for answers," said Dr. Michael Coe, co-chair of the committee. "Given the new direction there are many questions as to what producers, marketers, and processors of livestock in the U.S. should expect as a result of the shift in policy."

The committee's panel will include a representative from each of the major food animal sectors as well as the livestock auctions and processors. "We anticipate there will be a substantial amount of discussion that will provide valuable input to USDA, the States and the Tribal Nations on the concerns and ideas from these representatives," added Coe. The committee's meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, March 17, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m.

"NIAA has been very involved in convening such panels and conferences over the past two decades in order to assist in developing consensus across animal agriculture on animal identification issues," states Dr. Leonard Bull, chairman of the NIAA board of directors. "This is yet another opportunity for NIAA to provide the needed forum for animal agriculture to proactively work toward a positive solution to a very difficult and contentious issue."

NIAA's annual meeting will take place at the Westin Crown Center in Kansas City, Mo., with a block of rooms reserved at a special nightly rate of \$130/room, single or double occupancy. To receive this special rate, rooms must be reserved by Friday, Feb. 19, by calling 816-474-4400 and specifying that you are with the National Institute for Animal Agriculture.

A schedule of events for NIAA's 2010 annual meeting, meeting registration, list of NIAA committees and hotel information are available at the NIAA website:

www.animalagriculture.org. Individuals are also welcome to call NIAA at (719) 538-8843.

The National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) is a non-profit, membership-driven organization that unites and advances animal agriculture—the beef, dairy, equine, goat, poultry, sheep and swine industries. NIAA is dedicated to programs that work towards the eradication of diseases that pose risk to the health of animals, wildlife and humans; promote a safe and wholesome food supply for our national and abroad; and promote best practices in environmental stewardship, animal health and well-being. Farmers, ranchers, veterinarians, scientists, state and federal officials, and business executives comprise NIAA's membership.

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