

Cattle HEALTH REPORT

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Fall 2005

Private Database Leads Discussion Topics at USAHA's Livestock Identification Committee

A privately held database became a contentious issue for the U.S. Animal Health Association's (USAHA) Livestock Identification Committee in early November. The day-long meeting on Nov. 8, part of the organization's 109th annual meeting, hosted a variety of constituents interested in the future of the private animal tracking database.

A number of industry leaders spoke throughout the day about the various components of animal identification, ranging from identification technology such as RFID and DNA, to pilot project updates and a state survey on legislation involving animal ID. USDA also provided an update on federal activities of the National Animal

Identification System (NAIS), including the database.

"Privatization of the animal tracking database is a significant issue; one that USDA takes very seriously," said Dr. John Clifford, APHIS deputy administrator for veterinary services. "Privatization of the database will help us achieve our end goal while strengthening our partnership with industry."

The collection of animal movement data, which is essential to achieving full-traceability in 48 hours, is the greatest challenge of the program, according to Clifford. He urged stakeholders to work collectively to resolve the data collection infrastructure questions and to remain focused on advancing premises registration and animal identification.

"While the privatization of the animal movement tracking database is a change from our initial direction, the overall fundamentals of NAIS continue to follow the direction that many of you helped establish over the past several years. The key components as defined in the Draft Program Standards will continue to guide the implementation of NAIS."

During the business meeting, the private tracking database was discussed in depth by a number of committee members, following a pair of motions on the issue.

"We owe it to ourselves, to this debate, and we owe it to the Secretary to explore if and how this can be implemented," said Matt

"Privatization of the animal tracking database is a significant issue; one that USDA takes very seriously."

DR. JOHN CLIFFORD, APHIS
DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR FOR
VETERINARY SERVICES

Brockman, Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, who advocated the defeat of a resolution that would recommend that USDA implement the tracking database as outlined in the U.S. Animal Identification Plan (USAIP), but to no avail. Other committee members argued that the industry was not properly represented in the decision to pursue a private database.

At the end of the day, the committee had passed the aforementioned resolution, which was in turn debated and passed again in the membership meeting.

Additionally, during the membership meeting, a directive was passed that, essentially, the USAHA president assemble a group of representative stakeholders to meet with the Secretary of Agriculture to discuss solutions for this resolution passed by the USAHA.

Another resolution for USAHA to help develop the necessary components for a privately held database, via a consortium, was tabled during the committee meeting and lacked votes to be brought back to the floor. ●

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National Animal Identification Gets Extra Push From IDairy

Six leading U.S. dairy organizations join forces

The dairy industry put its self on center stage at the World Dairy Expo on Oct. 6 in the animal identification arena. IDairy, a group of six leading dairy organizations, announced it will work to facilitate a national animal ID system.

Representatives from the American Jersey Cattle Association, Holstein Association USA, Inc., National Association for Animal

Breeders, National Dairy Herd Improvement Association, National Milk Producers Federation and Professional Dairy Heifer Growers Association have come together to urge dairy producers to register their farm premises as the first step toward a national animal ID program.

"We cannot wait for the government, other industries or an animal disease to force dairy farmers into an animal identification system. We need to come together as an industry and protect the dairy sector through national animal ID," said the newly formed IDairy organization.

While the U.S. Department of Agriculture decides on the logistics of a national ID system, IDairy will take steps to further the dairy industry along in the process. The industry is uniquely positioned because more than half of the nine million milking cows are already

identified through dairy organizations.

IDairy hopes to have all dairy cows identified prior to the 2009 goal set by

USDA. In order to accomplish this, IDairy has three phases. The first phase is to have farmers register their premises; next, farmers have to identify each animal; and finally, the transfer of data from the individual systems to a national database will be the third phase of IDairy.

IDairy will soon be able to track how many premises are registered and provide information to dairy farmers to make each step of this process as seamless as possible. Down the road, IDairy will provide tag criteria and specific instructions on the best method of identifying each dairy animal.

Visit www.idairy.org for the most up to date information involving national animal ID and the organizations involved. ●



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Holstein Clarifies Involvement with NCBA on ID

The National Cattlemen's Beef Association announced in mid-October that Holstein Association USA was partnering in a consortium to move ahead with a private tracking database for the National Animal Identification System. The announcement, however, appeared premature in nature, though both groups are still engaged in NAIS.

"Although Holstein Association

USA, Inc. has not agreed to be part of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) consortium as reported on October 12, we do commend NCBA in their efforts to establish a national animal ID program," said John M. Meyer, Chief Executive Officer of the Holstein Association USA, Inc. "America's farmers and ranchers are vulnerable without such a system." ●

FDA Proposes Changes to BSE Rule

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Oct. 4 announced new measures to further minimize risks with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE, or mad cow disease). The Agency is proposing to amend its animal feed regulations to prohibit from use in the food or feed of all animals certain high risk cattle materials that can potentially carry the BSE-infectious agent. All of the proposed prohibitions, except for those related to tallow, have already applied to cattle feed since 1997.

"These additional measures that we proposed today will make an already small risk even smaller by further strengthening the effective measures already in place to protect American consumers from BSE," said acting FDA commissioner Dr. Andrew von Eschenbach.

These high risk cattle materials prohibited in the new proposed rule include:

- The brains and spinal cords from cattle 30 months of age and older,
- The brains and spinal cords from cattle of any age not inspected and passed for human consumption,
- The entire carcass of cattle not inspected and passed for human consumption if the brains and spinal cords have not been removed,
- Tallow that is derived from the materials prohibited by this proposed rule if the tallow contains more than 0.15 percent insoluble impurities,
- Mechanically separated beef that is derived from the materials prohibited by this proposed rule.

The proposed regulation builds on a series of firewalls that include FDA's 1997 feed regulation which prohibits the use of certain mam-

malian-origin proteins in ruminant feed (e.g. for cattle and sheep), but allows these materials to be used in feed for non-ruminant species. The removal of high-risk materials from all animal feed – including pet food – will protect against the transmission of the agent of BSE that could occur either through cross-contamination of ruminant feed with non-ruminant feed or feed ingredients during feed manufacture and transport, or intentional or unintentional misfeeding of non-ruminant feed to ruminants on the farm.

However, the National Renderers Association has concerns with the change. NRA president Tom Cook told *Feedstuffs* that they feel the change isn't necessary. He indicated that the minimal reduction in risk may not be worth the cost to the industry to expand the restrictions on the aforementioned materials.

Cook added that NRA has questioned some of the cost estimations FDA has put forth. NRA is in the process of conducting a member survey to better estimate the industry cost burden with such a change.

In July 2004, FDA and USDA jointly published an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) in which FDA announced its tentative conclusion that it should propose banning SRMs in all animal feed. In this ANPRM, FDA asked for comment on this measure and also on other feed control measures such as prohibiting the use of all mammalian and poultry protein in ruminant feed.

FDA also asked for comment on the set of measures that the agency had announced in January 2004 including the elimination of

the exemptions for blood and blood products and "plate waste" from the 1997 ruminant feed rule.

Comprehensive information about FDA's work on BSE are available at www.fda.gov/oc/opacom/hottopics/bse.html. ●

NAHRS Nears Full State Participation

All but eight states are now actively participating in the National Animal Health Reporting System (NAHRS), according to a report presented at a meeting of the Committee on Animal Health Information Systems on Nov 7. The committee is a joint effort of the U.S. Animal Health Association (USAHA) and the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD).

According to the report, several other states are finalizing their reporting procedures. The 42 participating states represent 86 percent of the cattle, 66 percent of the swine, 90 percent of the sheep, 67 percent of the poultry and 84 percent of the catfish value of U.S. production for these commodities.

Under NAHRS, state animal health officials report on a monthly basis on the occurrence or non-occurrence of specific diseases listed by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE). The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service uses this information in a number of different ways. The data provides the basis for the annual report that the United States is obligated to make to OIE.

Learning from ID Experience

When pilot projects were initiated in 2004, many were anxious to see results of how animal identification would play out in a real-world situation.

ID/INFO EXPO 2005 provided an opportunity for participants to see some of the progress made in the field with these pilot projects, in addition to highlighting some of the many challenges that face the industry.

Jim Akers of the University of Kentucky has been involved with the Southeast Livestock Network (SLN) in their efforts to gather practical data on ID implementation. The SLN is an LLC owned in part by the state cattle organizations in Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.

Akers said in his presentation that the goals of the SLN are to develop a system that:

- Creates the largest possible body of data to enhance disease surveillance and management programs;
- Minimize impact on markets;
- Minimize investment and workload of all stakeholders; and
- Protect the integrity of BQA, animal and human safety.

The SLN has been an ongoing project, and when pilot project dollars became available, the SLN leaders were able to apply those funds to the program, and share the experience with the unique southern cattle industry. The grant went to tracking slaughter cattle to a plant in Georgia.

Premises Identification

"Education is our biggest challenge," said Akers. A portion of the pilot project was used to help educate producers on premises registration. The SLN developed a display that was taken to markets for coor-

dinated events, such as sales. Producers were encouraged to register their premises. Additionally, animal health officials were brought in to help answer questions.

Akers indicated that anywhere from 50 to 150 premises applications were collected at the various events.

Teaching ID

Not only was education important for premises registration, but also for producers to understand a broader scope of what NAIS helps accomplish. The SLN offered handouts and developed some key messages to help producers understand some practical implications involved with animal identification. Akers indicated that they wanted to help producers see the differences in management, marketing and compliance as it relates to ID. They also encouraged producers to tag cattle at home, to help minimize cost, maintain market flow and allow for more control with shrink.

Applied Technology

The SLN did test a variety of data collection devices in its project, in addition to the education. The systems were used during sales throughout the south. Tags were typically applied at the same time as a back tag for cross-reference. The electronic ID became a tool in the management of the sales.

Handheld readers and stationary walk-through readers have been compared by the SLN.

"Hand reading at the chute side is most accurate," said Akers noting that tags were rarely missed. The handheld readers tend to be less expensive, though they are more labor-intensive and tend to slow the



Jim Akers

flow of cattle through the market. Akers says that the handhelds may be a viable option for smaller markets.

In contrast, the walk-through readers have their own advantages, as Akers said that they are easier to use, and require less labor. Though they are a larger investment, the disruption of cattle flow is minimal. Akers added that accuracy ranged from 92 to 99 percent, which raises more questions about which type is better.

"Is it worth changing our industry and our handling and marketing procedures to get 100 percent," Akers asked. He posed the question on the basis of establishing whether or not 96 to 98 percent readability is enough to allow animal health officials to perform traceback.

For Akers' full presentation, and other pilot project reports, log on to www.animalagriculture.org. ●

USDA Offers \$3 Million for NAIS Projects

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service announced it will award \$3 million in cooperative agreements to states and tribes for conducting research to develop or test potential solutions for animal identification and automated data collection in support of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS).

Project requirements and funding application packages are available on the APHIS Web site at www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/fmd/agreements_announcements.html. The deadline for application is Dec. 30.

Education Prioritized for Johne's Disease Program

Education continues to be a high priority of the National Johne's Disease Control Program.

Citing this need for education, the U.S.

Animal Health

Association (USAHA)

Committee on Johne's

Disease, at its meeting in early

November in Hershey, Pa., called

on USDA's Animal and Plant

Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

to continue funding the National

Johne's Education Initiative

through a cooperative agreement

with the National Institute for

Animal Agriculture (NIAA).

In this same area, the committee said that a better understanding of the economic impacts of Johne's



disease on beef and dairy production is needed to encourage producer participation in the national control program. Johne's disease is a chronic bacterial infection of cattle and other ruminants that causes prolonged diarrhea, weight loss and lowered milk production.

The committee called for the production of a "white paper" to spell out the direct and indirect economic impacts of Johne's disease on dairy and beef production. The committee also called for APHIS to conduct a new national Johne's disease dairy herd prevalence study.

Information gained from such a study could support the economic analysis of the costs of the disease to producers. ●

Johnesdisease.org Launched

The National Johne's Education Initiative, announced earlier this fall, has launched a web site, www.johnesdisease.org, to help producers access information on Johne's programs from around the country.

As it continues to evolve and gather more information, the site is intended to be a hub for educational resources for producers, Extension and veterinarians.

The initiative is a cooperative effort of the National Institute for Animal Agriculture and USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services, in association with the National Johne's Working Group and the United States Animal Health Association.

APHIS Releases 2004 U.S. Animal Health Report

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) released the 2004 U.S. Animal Health Report on Oct. 7, a national overview of domestic animal health in the United States, which is the first report of its kind.

The report addresses the many components of the U.S. animal health infrastructure, animal population demographics, new initiatives and approaches to foreign animal disease surveillance. As an annual publication, the 2004 report will be updated and refined each year, providing another venue to communicate with stakeholders and the public about APHIS programs.

The report is a direct result of an external review of the nation's animal health safeguarding system. The animal health safeguarding review, which was released in November 2001, assessed the performance, processes and proce-

dures used to ensure mission success for the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service; (APHIS) specifically its veterinary services program as well as industry partners. The mission: to protect and to improve the health, quality and marketability of the nation's animals, animal products and veterinary biologics.

New animal-health initiatives highlighted in the 2004 U.S. Animal Health Report include:

- The National Animal Identification System, tasked with coordinating the establishment of species-specific working groups, supporting the development of state premises systems and developing a national allocation data-



base for premises identification numbers in order to develop a national tracking system for U.S. livestock.

- The national surveillance unit – located within the Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health – responsible for coordinating the development of the national animal health surveillance system.

animal health surveillance system.

- The bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) enhanced surveillance plan, designed to augment USDA's existing targeted surveillance efforts by strengthening surveillance in the high-risk cattle population.

The 2004 U.S. Animal Health Report can be found on the APHIS Web site at www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/pubs/2004_us_animal_health_report.pdf. ●

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Beef Trade Opens with Japan

"I'm very pleased to announce that the Japanese market is now open to U.S. beef products," said Agriculture Mike Johanns on Dec. 12. "Resuming beef trade with Japan is great news for American producers and Japanese consumers, as well as an important step toward normalized trade based on scientifically sound, internationally recognized standards."

The announcement comes following nearly a two-year ban on U.S. beef by Japan. The ban was initiated by the report of a BSE-positive cow in Washington state. Since that time, the United States has been working to reopen those markets, which in 2003, prior to the ban, represented \$1.4 billion in beef exports.

Under the announced agreement, the United States is able to export beef from cattle 20 months of age and younger to Japan.

"Japan's action...sets an excellent example for other countries in Asia whose markets remain closed," added Johanns. "I urge all countries to take a science-based approach and adopt OIE standards for allowing beef trade."

Brazil Battling FMD

Brazil continues a battle with foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), with cases first diagnosed in early October. The latest reports indicate the total is more than 20 cases as officials work to control the disease. The outbreak originated in Mato Grosso do Sul, one of the country's highest cattle-producing states, at an estimated 25 million.

The Brazilian government has stated that 41 municipalities are at risk for the disease. Officials have

put into place plans to vaccinate some 160 million cattle to prevent the spread of FMD, which represents about 80 percent of Brazil's cattle herd.

Brazilian Minister of Agriculture Roberto Rodrigues testified before its Congress that export losses could reach as high as \$1.7 billion. Brazil led the world in beef exports, totaling \$2.5 billion.

Health officials from Mato Grosso do Sul say that cattle smuggled from Paraguay may be the source of the disease, though Paraguay deny that their herds were infected.

Effort Renewed to Eradicate FMD from the Americas

A high-level meeting on the eradication of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in the Western Hemisphere was held in Washington, D.C. on Oct. 27 at the headquarters of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

Those in attendance were briefed by the Inter-American Group for the Eradication of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (GIEFA) on a strategic plan outlining the final steps needed to eradicate FMD from the Americas, once and for all. GIEFA was formed in 2004.

Despite past progress, there are several regions in South America that continue to be plagued by FMD. Venezuela, Ecuador, and the Chaco Region that includes parts of Bolivia, Paraguay and Argentina, all contain FMD endemic zones.

According to animal health officials in the U.S. and throughout the region, these zones have coexisting structural and opera-



David Harlan, director, Global Animal Health and Food Safety, Cargill, Inc., Dr. Bret Marsh, president of the U.S. Animal Health Association and Glenn Slack, CEO of the National Institute for Animal Agriculture, listen to a presentation at the PAHO/FMD briefing. Photo courtesy Sabastio Guedes, Brazil.

tional deficiencies in the delivery of necessary veterinary services.

The risk for potential spread to FMD-free countries had become real just weeks earlier when Brazilian agriculture officials diagnosed the disease in that country.

A delegation of industry leaders and animal health officials from the U.S. are planning a trip in January to meet with agricultural ministers in the region to encourage their embrace of the GIEFA action plan.

Michigan State Offers International Food Law Courses

Michigan State University's Institute for Food Laws and Regulations has expanded its distance education program to include a course focusing on OIE, the World Organization for Animal Health, including a broad range of modules on OIE's role in global animal health.

A total of eight courses are available in the certificate program, including the OIE course. They are

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available completely over the Internet. The spring semester 2006 begins Jan. 9, 2006, and the fall semester begins Aug. 28, 2006.

The award winning program offers courses taught by an international network of food science, academic, regulatory and legal professionals who understand the legal complexities of the food laws and how they impact the flow of food, plants, animals and agricultural products across national bound-

Minnesota Still Dealing with TB

Minnesota continues a tuberculosis investigation with a total of 39 herds quarantined, according to the Minnesota Board of Animal Health. Twenty-one of these quarantines have been released as the herds have tested negative for tuberculosis. A total of four herds have been found positive for the disease. The premises of the first infected herd has been cleaned and disinfected. The second and third herds were depopulated in November. The fourth herd is in the appraisal and indemnity process.

In addition to testing herds with cattle contact or movement in and out of the infected herds, testing is planned for cattle herds within a 15-mile radius of the four infected herds. This surveillance testing will provide additional assurance that animal health officials have identified and eliminated the disease in Minnesota. Farmers in these areas will have the opportunity to have their herds TB tested at no cost.

aries.

To learn more about these opportunities, log onto the Internet at vu.msu.edu/preview/anr-ifl/.

Crawford Resigns as FDA Commissioner

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Lester Crawford announced his resignation on Sept. 23, just two months following a lengthy approval process from the Senate.

Crawford was previously agency deputy and acting commissioner before taking the top post.

Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt accepted Crawford's resignation.

Dr. Andrew C. von Eschenbach will fill the position in the interim, in addition to his post as head of the National Cancer Institute.

Crawford, who received his DVM from Auburn University and a Ph.D. in pharmacology from the University of Georgia, prior to his roles with FDA, served as Administrator of the Food Safety and Inspection Service (USDA).

USAHA Elects New Leadership

Dr. Bret Marsh, Indiana State Veterinarian, was elected president of the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) at its 109th annual meeting in Hershey, Pa. on Nov. 9.

More than 1,400 people – a record-breaking attendance for the fourth consecutive year – attended this year's week-long conference, held in conjunction with the annual meeting of the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD), to discuss issues related to the health of farm livestock,

wildlife, poultry and fish. Health concerns at the interface of wildlife, people and domestic animals was the featured topic at this year's general session.

"Over the next year, we will work together with input from the membership and, more specifically, from the Board of Directors to discover our core values," Dr. Marsh said. "We will use this foundation to plan for the future strategically."

President-elect of USAHA is Dr. Lee M. Myers, Georgia State Veterinarian. Other officers are James Leafstedt, South Dakota pork producer, first vice-president; Dr. Don Hoenig, Maine State Veterinarian, second vice-president; Dr. Richard Breitmeyer, California State Veterinarian, third vice-president; Dr. William L. Hartmann, Minnesota State Veterinarian, treasurer; and Dr. J Lee Alley, retired Alabama State Veterinarian, secretary.

UM&R on TB Approved at USAHA

The Tuberculosis Committee of the U.S. Animal Health Association (USAHA) approved a "Uniform Methods and Rules" for eradication of TB in captive cervids on Nov. 8. This document sets standards for eliminating the disease in captive deer, elk and other cervid herds.

The committee also went on record as requiring a negative TB test on dairy cattle that are moved interstate.

Finally, the committee called for instituting provisions that would allow feeder cattle from specific states in Mexico to enter the United States only if they go directly to an "approved feedlot." ●

ID/INFO EXPO 2005 Offers Snapshot of Animal ID

ID/INFO EXPO 2005 was an opportunity for industry stakeholders to hear the latest information on animal identification in the U.S. And, the event proved to be an even more important chance for stakeholders to voice concerns and pose questions to industry leaders on the future direction of the system.

Hundreds of questions were posed to the 67 speakers at the one-of-a-kind conference and trade show, held Sept. 27-29 in Chicago.



(l-r) Under Secretary Dr. Chuck Lambert, Dr. John Clifford, Dr. David Thain and Dr. Ken Olson.

Approximately 530 individuals attended the event. The record attendance included producers, veterinarians, animal identification companies and service providers, state and federal animal health officials and other allied industry stakeholders.

Since the Aug. 30 announcement by Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns that the animal tracking database will be developed and implemented by the industry, stake-

holders have been attentive to how this portion of the system will move forward. Dr. John Clifford, deputy administrator for USDA, APHIS, Veterinary Services spoke to participants about USDA's expectations.

"What USDA is looking for is a single legal entity that represents all species groups and all allied industries that are affected by this program," he said. Clifford

added that USDA would plan to enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with this legal entity to carry out state and federal health officials' needs for an animal movement database. Clifford later clarified that health officials would need a single interface for 24/7 access to the data, indicating that a single, central database is not the only viable option.

Clifford also made it clear that there are no USDA dollars currently available to help establish or operate the private database. An Oct. 12 stakeholders meeting, hosted by USDA, provided an information session on how the system could work, further clarifying the industry's role.

Clifford, who was joined by Deputy Under Secretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs, Dr. Chuck Lambert, encouraged

progress as USDA would continue with premises registration and the animal identification numbering system (AIN).

Dr. David Thain, State Veterinarian for Nevada and president of the National Assembly of State Animal Health Officials, offered a state-level assessment of NAIS, noting that accomplishments have been made with premises registration, as well as some state legislation for animal ID. More importantly, he encouraged stakeholders to maintain a simple mindset to move ahead with animal ID, and to not "squander this opportunity."

Dr. Ken Olson, KEO Consulting, offered an industry perspective on NAIS.

"The public has to trust what we're doing, the international community has to trust what we're doing," said Olson. He added that some stakeholders were concerned with the credibility of an industry-managed database.

Aside from those concerns, progress is still happening in other facets of NAIS. USDA reported that all 50 states are capable of registering premises, and as of Nov. 15, 147,205 premises have been registered in the United States.

In addition to presentations on premises registration, reports on 20 pilot project reports were presented from across the country, featuring cattle, markets, transporters, sheep, swine and equine. Though many of the projects showed that technology still needs to be improved, many producers appear to be willing to participate and actively engage their operations in the national animal identification effort.

Presentations from the event can be accessed on the Internet at www.animalagriculture.org. ●

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