

## Questions Directed to Session II Panel\*

Dr. John Kellar  
Kevin Maher  
Wim Wismans  
Richard Nelson  
Dr. Sidney Spahr

**\*Recorded on audiotape. Some portions inaudible.**

### **Q. Nancy Robinson, Livestock Marketing Association**

Mr. Kellar, if you had a recommendation for two or three pitfalls that we need to avoid as we proceed in looking at developing national systems or if not pitfalls, those things that we need to focus on in our efforts, what would they be? You have had a lot of experience, I almost feel like we could have brought you in, had you tell us about Ag Canada's experiences and then gone from there because obviously you have been through a lot of what we are going through now.

### **A. John Kellar, Agriculture CANADA**

I guess the first lesson I would offer is to chase an approach of equivalence as opposed to an approach of strict uniformity. I hear the standards being established by ISO and certainly that has to be the way to go. You can't expect everyone to have a rectangular box if a circular box will do the same job. That is the lesson we have learned about the metal tag. Certainly you can't expect that the industry is going to do something that you think is inherently correct if the commercial reality doesn't reflect it. So as much as electronic ID seems to be the way to go, until it reaches a benefit cost relationship that is attractive to the industry, it won't fly. To echo what was mentioned earlier today, it has to be a collaborative approach and it is funny, I have come from a meeting on emerging pathogens just two days ago in Canada and exactly the same message was given. At a time of diminishing resources the only way to go on any universal problem such as we face is as a collaborative one and that is why I described the 90's as the era of collaboration with our industry in Canada. In terms of a third lesson, I think with great respect for what is being achieved in the Netherlands, patience is the rule. The first journey of a 1,000 miles starts with a single step. I think that is the thing.

### **Q. Glenn Cherry, Holstein Association**

A question for Wim, I am impressed with your system of identification that is comprehensive and value added. I assume that also includes a cost to record animal movement or changes of ownership, does it afford all that?

### **A. Wim Wismans, Royal Dutch Cattle Syndicate**

The identification system today is central paid. It is decided it is already that the farmer has to pay the refusal. It is always the case in the Netherlands that for animal health purposes, the system is paid 50%

by the farmers union so that it is farmers money and 50% by the government because we will go in the direction that 100% will be paid by the farmer.

**Q. Glenn Cherry, Holstein Association**

We have talked earlier about identification and now we are hearing about the database as the key elements of any system. The third element is the farm location or holding. How do you identify the holdings in the Netherlands?

**A. Wim Wismans, Royal Dutch Cattle Syndicate**

That is also a central system and is to my opinion, very important that the same herd number is used for all species for all activities. So we have decided that it is the responsibility of the animal health organization to give a number to a farmer. A 7 digit number, all numeric to a farm and that is used for all species.

**Q. Glenn Cherry, Holstein Association**

A third question relates to the identification number again. Initially we talked about ten digits for the basic number excluding country code, and now we talk about a 12 digit number. I think some of the literature I read last evening indicated if we are to use a species code, it would be in the 12 digit number. That gives me a little concern, I would like it to be a little clearer than that. Do you want to comment on that Wim?

**A. Wim Wismans, Royal Dutch Cattle Association**

I think it is an agreement with each other. Richard Nelson is talking about the Holstein breed, about cattle and 10 digits is enough. When you need certain two digits to make a number unique over the species and species approach is a possibility. That is the way we want to do it in the Netherlands. Let's say as conventional authority, you have 12 digits to give a number to an animal but for all practical reasons, of course, it is best that the number is as low as possible. So when you use a species code, you can put it in the computer but you don't have to confuse the farmer with a big number of 12 digits when you have a small number of animals, maybe 5 numbers is enough, but in the computer, you store 12. With the 3 digits for the country code, you come with a total of 15. Lets say, now we have standards for electronic identification and in my opinion, you have to use that for all situations not only for electronic identification, but also for your system with tags. Use exactly the same form for all systems.

**Q. Bert Mitchell, Food and Drug Administration**

I have a question with respect to the Dutch system, sort of having to do with a benefit statement for a very complex and apparently well organized and universally applicable unique identification number for all the bovine species. In particular, how useful has this system been in follow-up on illegal use of drugs, for instance? Do you have some other example or benefit that you could cite to support this system?

**A. Wim Wismans, Royal Dutch Cattle Syndicate**

One of the most important reasons to go to this system is to have all cattle, within three days, within the computer. We got a lot of illegal import from other countries and it was only necessary to list an animal within a year if it stayed on the farm and within half a year when it should move to another farm. So then it was very easy to have illegal import. Of course the control or one of the important reasons is also the E.C. decided to stop vaccination. So when you stop vaccination, you must control the total farming system very well. With this system, it is very easy when you see something in the slaughter house, you know exactly where the animal is coming from and you can take action. So we have saved a lot of cost in bringing down the vaccination cost and also how the directive of the EC can now traceback the animal and can give a penalty to the farmer who does it this way. Why it is so important, you have to look at what is going wrong to make sure the good willing farmers are not at a disadvantage because of some who don't want to be in the system.