

## **ID Applications in Swine**

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It is critical for food safety, disease control and product improvement to have the ability to identify swine and provide the appropriate information back to their source. The pork industry has a history of interest in swine identification. In 1984, a NPPC Task Force was formed to study identification and develop a proposal for a national swine identification program. In 1985, the NPPC delegate body approved the identification standards presented by the Task Force. In 1986, the NPPC delegates supported mandatory identification of all slaughter hogs back to the last farm of ownership. NPPC supported mandatory identification for several reasons. First, the ability to improve product quality depends on the availability to the producer of information on the composition and merit of market hogs. Second, disease control programs such as the Pseudorabies Eradication Program need identification to be successful. In the area of food safety, accurate identification has been critical in the National Residue Program to correct problems. Currently, all hogs bought and sold into interstate commerce have to be identified in some manner.

In April 1993, NPPC requested that APHIS allocate additional resources to improve the swine identification system and traceback capabilities. APHIS has responded to this request and additional efforts are underway to evaluate current systems and research new identification methods. Improvements in the current system for sow and boar identification is a high priority for NPPC and APHIS. Technologies such as electronic ID are being evaluated. The current slap tattoo system for market hogs is working well.

Electronic identification shows great promise to enhance farm management practices. It is important for producers to realize direct benefits from identification systems and that costs become low enough to ensure payback. Electronic identification needs to meet the many needs of the various stakeholders. A key component to ensure a useful system will be developing a national premise ID system. When individual electronic ID numbers are given to a producer by the manufacturer, this number must be tied into a premise.

In the future there may be a need to tie the slap tattoo numbering system with premise ID numbers. In addition, producers would like to have a standardized system of reading electronic ID in place so packers could provide carcass information and regulatory requirements could be met with the same identification device.

Electronic identification should not be mandated but rather should gain widespread acceptance and use because of the economic and management benefits it offers producers. In this time of an increasingly global economy, it is important for electronic identification in the U.S. to meet international standards.

While NPPC supports identification systems that facilitate traceback to the last farm of ownership, in the area of pathogen control it is inappropriate to restrict animal movement without tools to offer a producer to improve the situation. Implementation of any movement restrictions must only take place when it has been clearly demonstrated that intervention on the farm is appropriate and produces a real, measurable difference in food safety.

NPPC sees this meeting as a pivotal one to focus and direct efforts in the area of electronic identification. NPPC continues to support improvements in swine identification methods for the long-term benefit of the pork industry.