

WORK GROUP I

Group Leader: Neil Hammerschmidt

Unique Issues/Requirements Specific for Species Groups

This group will identify the requirements, considerations and differences in the application of ID systems to the various species groups and segments of the livestock industry.

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Work Group I Report*

By Neil Hammerschmidt

** Recorded by audiotape. Some portions inaudible.*

The discussion of identification among species was a bigger challenge than I realized going in. I certainly found out how much lack of knowledge I have in regards to the identification of other species. One person summarized my work. He said you dairy people don't know what ID problems are all about. We did have representation from swine, sheep, dairy, beef, horses and llamas on a limited basis. As was indicated, our task was to define specifics for each species that was unique, that is what issues basically could not be duplicated from one to the other.

We looked at two broad issues, the production side from the farm level to slaughter and tried to break the database administration out as a separate issue. References were made to management environments, producers' preferences, individual ID versus lot ID, health, genetics, marketing issues, packer requirements and issues from the regulatory side. We didn't get too much into the database side but I think the specifics as you work with animal ID from birth through the entire chain helps identify the requirements of your database. While we realized that perhaps there is more uniqueness and differences between the species, or among the species, we learned equally as well that based on the applications of ID within a species, you have different requirements and different objectives. So with that, we looked at the production mode, that is the rearing of animals that go directly to the food chain,

we looked at the genetic side (the breeding stock side) and then the issue of food safety. I think each application puts another wrinkle on how animal ID is used.

Birth to slaughter, the immediate return to the food chain is what I call the production or commercial side. In those cases it appeared that in some species, identification from slaughter to the last point of production is adequate. On the genetic side, it is all the way through the system from the point of origin plus the linkage of parentage. Food safety, that issue also varied among the species and in some cases, the point of slaughter to last point of production is adequate. In other cases, traceback of all locations tracing the movement is essential and in other cases is it not.

We felt that there is some uniformity in both cases as far as levels of ID. There needs to be an immediate type of identification that works for the manager, producer and then probably a secondary level that can be used beyond the farm gate. The time of application varies, it not only varies among the species, but again, based on what the application (purpose for ID) is. So in swine, it broke out into two segments, the genetic side, or the genetic herds, and the production side. Obviously on the genetic side, individual ID at birth is basically essential. It is my understanding that there is enough volume of records in swine genetic herds that you don't really need to measure performance out in the commercial side. So individual ID to get genetic evaluations in swine can be limited to the "seed stock" sector. On the production side, lot ID or litter ID might be adequate in most cases. The identification at point of slaughter back to last point of production, in most cases is adequate. As for the need for a database, it was felt less necessary on the food safety side because of the infrequency of those problems going back beyond the last point of production. There is an adequate paper trail in these limited situations to investigate when it is necessary to track individual swine back to previous points of production.

The beef industry, also broke into genetics and commercial side with probably some different applications on food safety. While I have always had the mind set that identification at birth is a given, how practical is it? Beef herds out on ranges where they don't see the calf for weeks, months or however long, it is not very practical to think that we are going to get that individual calf identified at birth. So in the production herds, identifying the point of origin is probably adequate when the animal moves to a new location. Certainly in evaluating genetics you need the parentage attached to that identification. If you are not involved in genetic evaluations, you probably don't need to attach the parentage. At the same time, on the production end, you need the ID to go back to the last point of production so that the producer at that point can receive payment for the premium of a superior product.

In regards to disease control, there is probably a demand, a need and justification for a database through which it would be possible to electronically track the movement of animals because there is so much movement of these animals and given the different diseases, requiring tracing well beyond the last point of production.

In regard to horses, official and permanent identification at birth or shortly after is essential. The need for an electronic implant is probably greater in horses than any other species.

On the dairy side, identification at birth on the female side is very appropriate because you can use the information for genetic evaluations. On the male side, beyond the genetic sector, it is probably very similar to the beef production side. Tracking the animal back through the points of production is adequate. We don't really need lineage on most of those individuals if they don't go into breeding programs. When they go into the beef production side at this point, we don't have any genetic evaluations for dairy beef but I'd say that is something to give consideration to.

We would recommend that working groups be established by each species group to work with the packers and regulatory agencies to define a common point of implant for the transponders. We feel the biggest obstacle in making the identification system work, especially in the beef production side is to allow the packers a manageable system so the producers can get the information back. At this point, this seems to be a common obstacle but we need to define specific points of implants for each species to make electronic transponders practical.

I invite other members of the working group to add their comments, I am sure there are some that I overlooked, there might be some that I misinterpreted. Anybody, please?

Tim Dean, USDA-APHIS-VS Texas

We need to stress better collection from the slaughter plants. We have had a big problem with this and until we can get better cooperation on collection of any ID, a lot of our hopes and dreams are going to be useless. If we don't get this back we are not going to get anywhere on this. We are having that problem today and we need to address that too. Because this is going to hit us in the future.