

WORK GROUP II

Group Leader: Dr. Sid Spahr

National ID Systems: Common Issues Across Species

What technical capabilities, databases, etc. can be shared or duplicated across species? Also, what are the parameters of a workable national ID program taking into account the concerns and unique requirements of the various species groups and/or segments within the livestock industry? Some of the issues to be considered may include: uniformity or standardization, interstate movement regulations and other regulatory considerations, integrity of the ID device, premise identification, database management and likely stakeholders.

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Work Group II Report *

By Dr. Sid Spahr

** Recorded by audiotape. Some portions inaudible.*

The main topics that we discussed were standardization, premise identification, database management, and likely stakeholders.

I would like to start with the likely stakeholders in the decisions and the implementation of a national electronic identification system because there are many stakeholders. We come from many different backgrounds. It is worthwhile to sit back and to ask the question, who would benefit, and who are the stakeholders in the decisions that are made about a national ID system.

Equipment manufacturers

First of all, are the equipment manufacturers all the way from the factory to the consumer. Manufacturers of the equipment are involved not only as manufacturers of the ID equipment itself but of all the peripheral equipment that can go along with it, for example, the people that make scales, the people that make milk meters, the people that handle databases, etc.

Byproducts industry

The byproducts industry is important. It was pointed out in our group that leather manufacturing is becoming more important, that there are fewer cattle and more people and so the ratio of leather to people is changing. With the possible substitution of electronic ID for hot branding, much of the cost of electronic ID could be recovered through increased value of hides if a premium was paid for unblemished hides.

Regulatory industry

The regulatory industry, and we have a number of both state and federal regulatory agencies here, certainly has a big stake in a national electronic ID programs, and sometimes when we hear discussion, it sounds like they are the only stakeholders although that certainly is not the case.

Law enforcement agencies

Thievery and identification fraud is important in several species.

Packers

The packers are involved. We have talked about taking this sort of technology to the slaughter house and the packing house, and certainly those people are an integral part of the whole system. We need their cooperation and active involvement.

Breed association and genetic improvement groups

Some of the groups that have been pushing this program since its inception are the breed associations and genetic improvement groups. We have in several cases, particular species groups in the US and we could also include the Canadians. We have big export markets for US genetics and simply obtaining the data for breed improvement at the international level where animal genetic evaluations is not taking place internationally, is a problem. We have sent some of our genetics overseas and it is starting to come back now.

Laboratory research groups

The research people, universities, pharmaceutical firms, particularly with laboratory animals all use animal ID, and all these things impact.

Marketing groups

The marketers, the marketing association, a complete gamut through the marketing system.

Veterinarians

Many Veterinarians will be intimately involved one way or the other with various species.

Transportation and trade

The transportation industry, where we deal with interstate commerce, all of this group would be involved. Then the international community where we deal with international trade and with GATT and NAFTA, we anticipate that this will become even more important than it has been in the past.

A large percentage of the discussion in our group centered around standardization and the ISO standards. There were a lot of questions from the audience that were asked and a number of opinions expressed about the standards. However, it comes down to the concept that if we are going to have a national system, we need one standard reader that can read the transponders from any manufacturer that manufactures ISO standard transponders, and that we need to have producer groups, defined broadly to include both the regulatory agencies and livestock producer groups, agree to purchase equipment that follow the ISO standards. Those standards are still evolving slightly but most of the information about them is known to the equipment manufacturers and should be about completed after we get the report back from the ISO working group meeting in Braunschweig, Germany yesterday and today. So one of the main recommendations that would come out of this group is that the livestock groups, everybody included, should follow the ISO standards in making commitments for equipment for compatibility's sake in the future.

We also discussed Interstate movement regulations. Here we get to the idea of a regulatory action to know where animals are at a particular time, and where they come from, a procedure that would require transaction reporting. If we were going to have a national database that used this in a regulatory manner, then it would be desirable to have transaction reporting when animals were moved from one place to another. Obviously we have no incentive for transaction reporting at this time, in that it is not mandatory, and there is no penalty for not reporting movement from one location to another. There would have to be more than a voluntary program to make it happen.

We discussed that the long term goal is birth to death identification, and mandatory in the long term. However, we have the question about how fast it can happen, and probably it is going to be voluntary with some incentives for it to happen in the beginning. The questions were raised by some of our members, is it at all feasible and who is going to pay? We get back to the idea that some incentives need to be built into the system and there are many of the user groups that can build incentives into changing to this type of system if they make the decision to do so.

We had substantial discussion about database management. It was the consensus of our group that it would be better to have a number of decentralized databases rather than having one national centralized database, regardless of who controlled the national database. However, the point was also made that these de-centralized databases need to have linkages, and that they need to be compatible so that pertinent information could be transferred from one database to another with the idea that we would have multiple users. The producer's needs are different than the regulatory needs. The regulatory

agencies probably don't have reason to have access to all of the individual production information about animals, so different users have different needs, but there needs to be electronic linkage for certain parts of the database to make the regulatory part of it work. There seemed to be consensus in our group that these databases need to be industry driven. We discovered that we did have a number of people in our group that already either had databases representing their particular segment of the industry or they have the technology to build it and were thinking about it for particular groups. Having protocols for being compatible is desirable. There needs to be some rules set up for right to access the information, and to use the example that was given yesterday, it probably is not a logical thing to have a database set up in such a way that anybody in the country could access all of the information. There needs to be restrictions on the access to the information.

We discussed the parameters of a workable national ID system involving the linking of information on centralized databases vs decentralized but which talk to each other, along with the idea of compatibility. Again if we are going to use these for regulatory purposes, for traceback, every point of transaction must maintain adequate records. Probably that is a detail that needs to be tidied up.

Individual animal ID tied to a premise ID was the way that we concluded would be needed to implement a national system for regulatory purposes. We had substantial discussion indicating that we could go part of the way toward traceback with just a premise ID, and we could go part of the way with just an identification ID, but to make the system work completely for traceback, both a premise and an animal identification were needed. The suggestion was made that for the identification of a premise, it would be really nice if the premise could be coded in such a way that the premise code number could be decoded into a particular locality, and when something is found at one premise, it often is a problem in the surrounding area, and it just happened to be detected on a particular premise.

We talked about using the credit card model, with the idea that there would be compatibility among different manufacturers with much of the information coded into the hardware. For example, the manufacturer code of an identification device could be encoded in the technology for the transponder. There are some decisions that either have to be made by the ISO group or that technology is used that permits encoding after the chip is manufactured a technology that is coming.

All of these things we felt needed to be profit driven, which is one of the challenges of the system, but we first need a structure. We need a structure in which the systems that evolve can fit in such a way that they can be profit driven.