

## NIAA Animal Identification and Information Systems Council Meeting

April 22, 2021

Council Co-Chair Glenn Fischer welcomed the Animal Identification and Information Systems Council meeting attendees and started the meeting with a brief comment on the USDA rule-making announcement regarding Animal Disease Traceability. He read the [updated statement](#) and stated any new information will be posted on the [USDA APHIS Animal Disease Traceability](#) website.

Co-Chair Fischer then introduced a slate of panelists who were tasked with providing insight around different commercial animal identification databases and information sharing systems across the private sector of the livestock industry. He emphasized the importance of understanding the various innovative systems and what value can be gained as a producer and/or other entity across the livestock value chain.

Featured panelists and brief descriptions of their shared content included the following:

1. Ron Lane with GVL (Global Vet Link) provided an overview of the company and explained what they do. With over 20 years of experience capturing animal movements (over 1.7 million movements in 2020), GVL serves as a digital railroad by collecting, transporting and storing data. They are an independent, privately held company, and ensuring peace of mind in terms of data privacy and security is key to their business. GVL accepts all forms of livestock identification; e.g. RFID, ear tags, metal bangs tags, photos, etc. They also provide
2. John Saunders with Where Food Comes From/IMI Global reviewed how their system contributes to traceability and verification for programs throughout the animal agriculture industry, especially for cattle. They are technology neutral with their business requiring 100 percent precision, so the more technologies available and used, the better. IMI Global believes information has value, and their systems use API connections first, but also work to collect and verify data through other methods. Their goal is to work with existing systems. Confidentiality is key, which includes the maintenance of existing business relationships.
  - a. Bob Scherer with Tyson explained how they must have traceability throughout their supply chain to meet requirements for export markets. They work with IMI Global on verification programs, and they're working with U.S. CattleTrace to support voluntary disease traceability in different parts of the country. Tyson believes that the small investment in a traceability system is worth the peace of mind – in a sense, an insurance policy.
3. Callahan Grund with U.S. CattleTrace shared some of the background of the organization. USCT started in 2018 as a pilot program in Kansas, focusing on developing a national disease traceability system throughout the beef supply chain. As a nonprofit organization established in 2018, they conducted a two-year pilot project with ranchers, livestock auction markets, feedyards and packing plants. After the pilot period and making adjustments to the system based on key learnings, multiple cattlemen's organizations joined together to form U.S. CattleTrace in 2020. They launched membership opportunities in January 2021 and continue to grow their supporters for a voluntary contact tracing system for disease traceability.

4. Gregg Barfield with BlockTrust Network explained this blockchain-based transparency platform for the livestock industry. It acts as a mechanism of trust and is an electronic ledger that provides a detailed history of interactions between parties without the ability to easily alter the data. The blockchain network does not replace a traditional database, but it is used in combination with other systems that view and manage the data. There are several potential uses for blockchain today and more in the future, including asset verification, supply chain management, transparency and traceability purposes and authentication of the “story of livestock.”

Co-Chair Fischer opened the opportunity for questions from Council meeting attendees to the panelists, and the discussion is summarized below.

Question and Answer Session Summary:

- Discussion around if any organizations had connected with dairy programs, as they play a role in the beef industry as well. All said they are integral to the beef supply chain and will be even more with the growing dairy on beef programs. The dairy industry needs to be incorporated, which should not be too difficult since they are efficient with RFID technology today already.
- Discussion around the impact on efficiency of disease traceability from an animal health official perspective if there are multiple systems. Panelists emphasized the importance of the organizations working together and collaborating, so data is accessible when needed in the event of a disease outbreak. While they do not see the industry moving to one system, the key part is that the systems will talk to each other. This process is in the works today.
- If producers do not retain ownership, how can they receive their carcass data (assuming the RFID tags stay in)? Panelists commented on the importance of a producer trying to retain at least partial ownership (e.g. 10%) through harvest so they can access the carcass data. The data is shared with the owners of the cattle, so retaining ownership ensures this component for data sharing is met. Otherwise, there is an extra step and the producer would need to work with whoever purchased their cattle. Panelists did comment on how this process is becoming (or will be) easier with new animal identification technology, but retaining ownership is still the best route to ensure a producer receives carcass data.
- Discussion around data privacy. Data privacy is important to all panelists and their organizations. Each organization commented on how/when they would share data in the event of a broad animal disease outbreak, with all of them emphasizing the importance of confirming/collecting permission from participants on the front end prior to sharing their data.

Co-Chair Fischer reviewed current Animal Identification and Information Systems Council resolutions, but none were up for renewal. The following resolutions were reviewed: ID1 Outreach/Education Efforts for the Animal Disease Traceability Framework, ID2 Slaughter Surveillance and ID Collection, ID3 Traceability Funding, and ID5 Use of Electronic Identification Devices and Information Management Systems in State, Federal and Tribal Animal Disease Traceability Programs. No comments or questions were introduced from Council meeting attendees.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 AM Central.