Animal Disease Traceability Proposed Rule

In early 2010, the USDA Secretary of Agriculture developed a new framework for Animal Disease Traceability. The Traceability framework will apply only to livestock that move interstate, offer low cost options for animal identification, attempt to have livestock continue to move efficiently in interstate commerce and provide flexibility to states in implementing the Traceability system. A Traceability rule making workgroup--comprised of the USDA, state and tribal animal health officials and livestock industry leaders--has been involved in a collaborative rule making process. This group developed a proposed Traceability rule that is planned to be published in Summer of 2011 and is projected to become a final rule published in the Code of Federal Regulations in July of 2012. The new rule will essentially require that all animals that are moved interstate be accompanied by a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) and be officially identified, with some exceptions to both requirements. For example, feeder cattle will not be required to be officially identified at the inception of the rule and will not be required to be listed on a CVI for the foreseeable future.

State animal health officials recognize that animal identification and Certificates of Veterinary Inspection are important tools for animal disease traceability. The use of these tools in current regulatory animal disease programs, through productive livestock industry participation, has been very successful in reducing the incidence of certain diseases. The reduction in certain diseases has brought about an overall decrease in animal identification and testing requirements for interstate livestock movements. Furthermore, the USDA has moved away from down-grading entire states in Tuberculosis or Brucellosis regulatory disease eradication programs and now states require testing or official animal identification only in certain areas within states or only to specific quarantined premises. Because of these reduced animal identification and testing requirements needed to move livestock interstate, states have recognized the need to improve their ability to trace livestock movements. Thus, they have begun to align their databases holding animal movement, animal disease test results and brand inspections information.

Animal Disease Traceability Proposed Rule & the Use of Brands


USDA supports the use of brands to identify cattle moving interstate. Further, USDA recognizes the value of brands and their prevalence in the western United States. Under USDA’s traceability framework and the upcoming draft proposed rule for traceability for livestock moving interstate, States will be able to continue using brands.

In the draft proposed rule, USDA will define official identification methods for each species. These official identification methods or devices will be accepted by all States and Tribes for the entry of livestock into their jurisdictions. States and Tribes will not be able to impose additional identification requirements if a producer uses the official identification method outlined in the proposed regulations. Alternatively, the animal health officials in two States or Tribes may agree to ship or receive animals that are identified by means other than the official identification method, including branding. In the draft proposed rule, the official identification method for cattle will be official eartags or group/lot identification when the use of a group/lot identification number is applicable. The draft proposed regulation clearly states that cattle and bison moved between shipping and receiving States or Tribes may alternatively be identified with another form of identification, including brands, tattoos, and breed registry certificates as agreed upon by animal health officials in the shipping and receiving States or Tribes.
It is our intention in defining official identification methods by species to provide clarity to livestock owners so they know what official identification options are accepted for the movement of their animals to any State. Additionally, receiving States or Tribes will not be allowed to require a specific official identification technology. For example, a State could not require all cattle to be officially identified with an official radio frequency identification ear tag. This is in keeping with our basic objective in the new animal disease traceability framework — to support the use of low cost technology.

The approach in the draft proposed regulation will provide flexibility for States and Tribes to use brands. The draft proposed regulation will be designed to support the practices that have proven to work well for those States and Tribes with authorized brand inspection. At the same time, establishing the official identification method in the draft proposed rule will ensure that no one State or Tribe can deny a method of official identification or require a specific method of official identification for entry of livestock into their jurisdiction.

(This update taken from USDA APHIS VS Animal Disease Traceability webpage at: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability/)

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