

USDA Seeks Dialogue with Producers and Stakeholders on National Animal Identification System

Contributed by Farm Compliance
Wednesday, 15 April 2009

Washington, DC - Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack today held a roundtable discussion with a variety of stakeholders representing the full spectrum of views on the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). The event kicks off a listening tour to gather feedback and input that will assist the Secretary in making decisions about the future direction of animal identification and traceability in the United States.

"Much work has been done over the past five years to engage producers in developing an animal identification system that they could support," said Vilsack. "However, many of the issues and concerns that were initially raised by producers, such as the cost, impact on small farmers, privacy and confidentiality and liability, continue to cause debate. In the spirit of President Obama's call for transparency in government, now is the time to have frank and open conversations about NAIS. We need to work collaboratively to resolve concerns and move forward with animal traceability."

USDA is seeking to engage stakeholders in an effort to hear not only their concerns but potential or feasible solutions to those concerns. The listening tour will seek input from communities throughout the country. As details for the tour are finalized, the information will be announced publicly and posted to the APHIS Web site at www.aphis.usda.gov. In the coming weeks, USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will also be publishing a notice in the Federal Register to request input. Producers and stakeholders will be notified when to visit www.regulations.gov to provide their suggestions and comments, or they can access the site through the APHIS NAIS Web site.

"I recognize many groups have provided input into the system previously," said Vilsack, "but we know more today what kind of system will work, than when NAIS was first envisioned. And, I encourage stakeholders--both small and large--to embrace this opportunity to tell us what kind of system they feel would work and to talk about solutions. Over the coming months it will be my goal to personally dialogue with as many as I can--to hear firsthand how we can work together to develop a system that everyone can support."

In 2004, APHIS began implementing NAIS, an animal traceability system that would enable producers and animal health officials to respond quickly and effectively to animal disease events in the United States.