

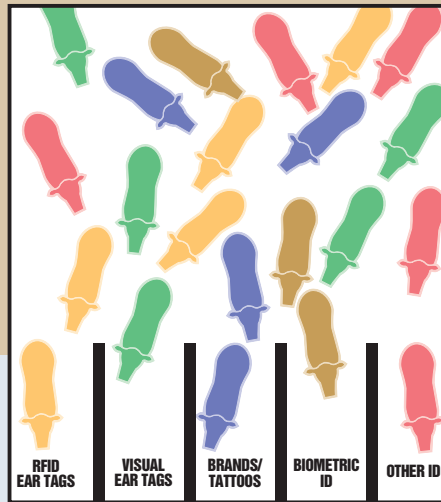
Simple Infrastructure Key to Success for National ID

Industry Sees ISO RFID as Solution

As USDA moves forward to establish a national identification system that is practical, affordable and accurate, it's clear that a critical early step is adoption of a standardized, basic technology. "It is because of our historic and recent experiences that the NAIS leadership will continue to recognize and support ISO compliant 11784 and 11785 technology as the foundation for implementing the NAIS," says Gary

Wilson, the Chairman of the Cattle Working Group. Allflex agrees. By starting with a simple, readily available technology that is already proven in numerous countries around the globe, all sectors of the beef industry can jump on board with proven technology.

The cost of RFID scanning equipment has come down while the accuracy and ease of reading has gone up. "Our RFID tag reading capabilities have been refined over several years in installations at sale barns, packing plants and commercial feedyards as well as on individual ranches and farms. It's now commonplace to see readers in multiple lanes able to read hundreds of cattle moving through at a normal pace," says Michael



It's Monday morning at XYZ Beef Packer and the first of 100 loads of cattle has just arrived. Forty of the cattle in this load have RFID ear tags, 13 have DNA tags, 4 left behind hair samples for DNA records at their ranch of origin, one had his retina scanned earlier in his life and the rest have only standard visual plastic tags.

You're the guy in charge of individual animal records for XYZ Beef Packer and you're not amused. Without an optical scanner, DNA testing equipment, antennae of various frequencies and a full-time clerk to record numbers from plastic tags, you cannot possibly do your job. You're expected to keep the line moving for maximum efficiency and your neck is on the line if information on individual animals is not captured.

Your system won't handle all the different tags and devices.

You're Toast!

Connole, Allflex country manager for Australia.

"Everybody had to get on the same page about which technology is best suited for the wide variety of applications. In our early days, there were several competing techniques and many still hold promise. But reality set in when we realized that multiple technologies would require a larger investment in reading devices than our industry was willing – or able – to commit. Adopting ISO compliant RFID tags solved problems of extra cost and reliable performance," Connole concludes.

Hundreds of hours of study and discussion led to the NAIS Cattle Working Group's recommendation in favor of RFID tags that meet ISO standards. This was the same conclusion that was reached by an NCBA Identification Committee. According to NCBA's Allen Bright, "Cattle producers from different parts of the country, representatives from sale barns, packers and technology manufacturers all participated in the planning process to review the many options. At the end of the day, there was strong consensus that the NAIS proposal will only work if we start simple. A successful animal identification

system requires a sound infrastructure of readers and tags in all sorts of animal handling facilities and scenarios. Opting for ISO RFID technology gives the U.S. a better chance of succeeding."





Pilot Programs Lead the Way Implementing ID

Montana Beef Network Uses ID to Drive Increased Value



Scott Holt helps tag animals with EID tags and enter information as part of the Northwest Pilot Project

The USDA is moving forward with the National Animal Identification System (NAIS), knowing the system must be suitable for a wide variety of livestock production systems. Federal funding approved for 30 pilot programs across the country in 2004 will communicate the intent of the NAIS and test processes for premises registrations and individual animal identification.

While these programs are picking up speed, the Montana Beef Network (MBN) has been tracking animal movements and recording production data using EID tags and readers for more than five years.

The MBN was formed in 1999 as a joint project of Montana State University (MSU) and the Montana Stockgrowers Association to create a value-added process tracing animal movement. The network captures production data as cattle move from ranch to feed yard to processor and provide it back to producers for production decisions. The system also has the ability to traceback a foreign animal disease (FAD) outbreak should one occur.

According to Dr. John Paterson, MSU Extension Beef/Cattle Specialist and MBN program director, the goal is an integrated approach to managing health and performance of an operation with customer-focused goals in mind.

“We wanted to come up with a way to help producers gather and use data that is customer focused and helps produce a product buyers want,” Paterson states.

MBN Builds Momentum

With the 2005 spring calf crop, the MBN will have tagged and tracked more than

100,000 animals. All participating producers follow common production practices including BQA certification, individual animal tagging with EID tags, a standard vaccination program and backgrounding. Data throughout the animal’s life is gathered and shared with producers to use in managing their operations.

Dean Peterson, a rancher near Judith Gap, Montana, was one of the first producers to sign up for the program. Despite the learning curve involved in tracking individual animal performance and using the data effectively, he’s sold on the value of the program for his operation.

“Because of this program, our operation has a strong reputation which makes it easier for us to sell our animals. We don’t have to look for buyers, they’re coming to us because they know we’ve got data on the performance of our animals,” said Peterson.

ID Drives Data Collection Infrastructure

Although the MBN has a strong track record, there have been challenges to overcome. “There’s a perception that once a calf has an EID tag, the data is automatically collected and arrives at the producer’s door. That’s a long way from how it works in reality,” added Paterson.

When a producer enrolls in the MBN, the producer can request a team of graduate students from MSU to assist in tagging animals and logging identification numbers. As these animals progress through to slaughter, the team captures data at key times and enters it into the producer’s data management program.

According to Lisa Duffy, MBN Project

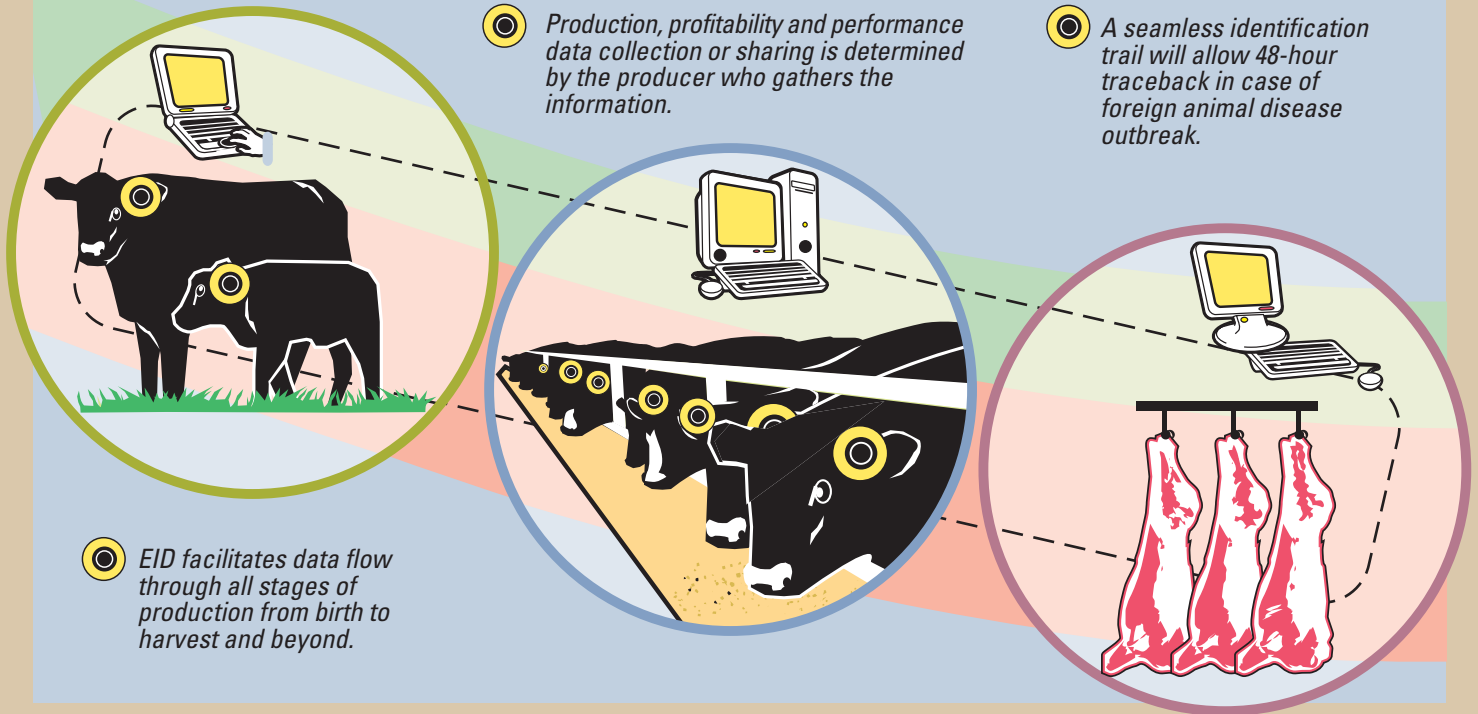


Rancher Dean Peterson runs the chute and records information as animals are processed

Production, profitability and performance data collection or sharing is determined by the producer who gathers the information.

A seamless identification trail will allow 48-hour traceback in case of foreign animal disease outbreak.

EID facilitates data flow through all stages of production from birth to harvest and beyond.



Coordinator, when animals leave the ranch for the feed yard or leave the feed yard for the packer, the owners need to be sure to contact the MBN so that they can get out and record the movements and the production or carcass data.

“Even though the EID tag makes it faster and more efficient to log the data, it doesn’t happen automatically. There’s a significant role for communication between various segments of the industry to ensure that movements are tracked and the data is collected,” Duffy said.

With individual EID identification, feed yards, auction barns and packers are beginning to install readers to capture data as well. Paterson says the tagging programs will help the industry adopt the infrastructure needed to capture data in a more seamless way.

Tracking animal movements is important in the event of a foreign animal disease (FAD) outbreak, but Paterson states the value of the MBN goes beyond animal health concerns to helping producers make data-based decisions.

“Producers are beginning to use this data to find the right marketing program for the cattle they have or to make decisions on how to get the cattle they need – these decisions can mean a lot to an operation’s bottom line,” Paterson added.

NAIS Northwest Pilot Project Addresses Regional Concerns

As state livestock associations, producer groups, state agriculture and animal health organizations begin the process of communicating USDA’s premises identification requirements, unique regional challenges are springing up.

Questions like, “How is a premises defined?” and, “What if my premises straddles two states?” can be difficult to unravel.

These are just a few of the issues that the Northwest Pilot Project is trying to sort out. Funding is provided through a USDA grant under the direction of the Idaho Department of Agriculture. The project is administered by a board of directors representing each participating state, including California, Oregon, Hawaii, Idaho, Utah, Nevada and Washington. These states comprise a regional trade area for the beef industry. The project will examine the effectiveness of premises and animal identification, provide communication and education about NAIS requirements and evaluate methods for identifying and tracking animals.

“The Northwest Region has unique concerns that may not be apparent on a national basis. For example, single operations may use pastures in multiple states or have public land allotments for grazing. Different states have different perspectives on these issues,” said Julie Morrison, NWPP project coordinator.

With the goal of implementing real-world ID systems that will work for a variety of operations, a mock national database was created to simulate how animal movements are tracked throughout the production life cycle. Currently the NWPP has over 20,000 cattle in seven states enrolled and just over 100 producers participating in the premises ID and individual tagging program.

Morrison says communication is key.

“Communication and dialogue with the industry is and will be a critical component in establishing the right system for the country. The pilot project gives us the opportunity to test different scenarios and see what works best.”

Glossary of Terms

Confused about the new terms related to animal identification? Here's a quick overview of key terms that will be increasingly visible and necessary for the industry to understand.

Electronic Identification (EID) –

An animal identification device containing an electronic chip; also referred to as a transponder.

Individual Animal Identification –

A means to provide unique identification of a particular animal and differentiate one animal from another.

ISO Standards –

The International Standardization Organization (ISO) is a non-governmental organization established in 1947 to promote standardization and related activities. The US Animal Identification Program has recommended and adopted standards for animal identification using EID tags.

National Animal Identification System (NAIS) –

A national program intended to identify animals and track them as they commingle with animals other than herd mates from their premises of origin in the event of a foreign animal disease (FAD) outbreak. Initially the program will be voluntary, but is expected to be mandatory by 2009.

Official Identification Numbers –

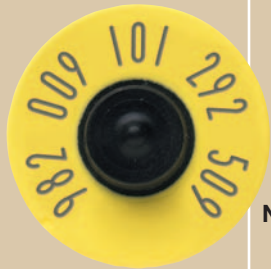
As part of the NAIS, the USDA will develop and allocate unique premises and individual animal identification numbers. The first step is premises registration followed by individual animal identification.

Premises –

By NAIS standards, a premises is defined as an identifiable location where animals are managed or held. Each distinct location would be identified with a unique premises number. At a minimum, the "home place" in which animals are raised needs to be registered for the operator to obtain a unique premises number. Additional locations are not required to be registered at this time, although it is highly encouraged.



Allflex High Performance Half Duplex EID Tags and Allflex Full Duplex EID Tags are ISO certified



Allflex Staff Spotlight

North Central Regional Manager,
Scott Holt



In the first five minutes of conversation with Scott, you'll quickly learn he's passionate about animal identification as a valuable tool for the livestock industry.

"Communication regarding animal identification is paramount. We need to help producers understand EID, what works and what doesn't," Scott states.

Based in Nampa, Idaho, Scott manages Allflex sales and marketing programs for Eastern Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, North and South Dakota and Nebraska. Covering this territory means opportunities to talk to producers about their identification and information needs. Scott knows the value of accurate information having begun his career in purebred ranch management.

"Identification is a powerful tool for producers to improve their herds by making information-based health, performance and marketing decisions. What business enterprise wouldn't benefit from having better, more accurate information," says Scott.

In addition to his duties with Allflex, Scott serves as the Animal Health Committee Chairman for the Idaho Cattleman's Association and is on the board of directors for the Northwest Pilot project. When his schedule allows, he can be found working as a ringman at purebred sales. He and wife, Kim, are parents of Emilee (six) and Ben (four).



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