

**RESOLUTION NUMBER: 8      APPROVED**

**SOURCE:                      COMMITTEE ON INTERSTATE AND INTERNATIONAL  
COMMERCE**

**SUBJECT MATTER:          Identification and Documentation of Cattle in Commerce**

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**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

On March 11, 2013, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) rule became effective. Under the final rule, unless specifically exempted, livestock moving interstate must be officially identified and accompanied by an interstate certificate of veterinary inspection. Owner-shipper statements or brand certificates may be used in certain circumstances when shipping and receiving States agree to alternative movement documentation. Beef breed stocker/feeder cattle less than 18 months of age are exempted from the ADT rule regarding official identification unless they are destined to an exhibition, show, rodeo, or recreational event. At that time, States were encouraged to issue official National Uniform Eartagging System (NUES) tags to producers to identify livestock.

Traceability has improved since the implementation of the ADT rule. There continue to be gaps in the ability of States to trace diseased cattle back to their premises of origin. States have encountered challenging problems such as improper administration of NUES tags, errors in recording NUES tags, and lost time and errors in transcribing information from paper forms into easily searchable databases to trace cattle in some disease cases.

The cattle industry, USDA, and State Animal Health agencies rely on traceability to control and respond to disease incidents quickly, facilitate business continuity in the event of a disease outbreak, and satisfy domestic consumers and international trading partners. To be more effective and efficient in these tasks, the United States' cattle traceability program must be strengthened.

While it is expected that increased efficiency and decreased labor costs will allow the industry to purchase tags and equipment and maintain equipment after the program is in place and functioning properly, it is equally expected that the USDA will provide seed money to States and/or industry for the same. The successful implementation of conversion to electronic identification from NUES tags will depend on the ability to negotiate a cost-sharing agreement between the involved parties.

## **RESOLUTION:**

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services and State Departments of Agriculture, Animal Health Commissions, and Boards of Animal Health to set a mandatory date of January 1, 2021, to discontinue allowing visual only tags (including National Uniform Eartagging System (NUES) tags) to be applied as official identification (ID) and a date of January 1, 2023, for all cattle and bison which are currently required to be officially identified under the rule to have electronic official ID tags which meet the standards defined by the USDA.

USDA shall be responsible for determining the specifications of the electronic official ID tags and reading equipment on or before July 1, 2019, after consultation with technology companies, industry, and other countries that have successfully implemented electronic ID programs. Official electronic ID tags must be read at the speed of commerce. Cattle and bison shall be identified prior to or when they leave their premises of birth or at the first point of commingling. Traceability to the premises of birth shall be maintained. Federal and State cost-sharing shall be considered. Federal/State Agencies, Industry, and Technology Companies shall ensure cost-sharing for this project.

## **INTERIM RESPONSE:**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) recognizes the challenges that arise from the use of visual only tags as official identification (ID). VS supports the recommendation from this resolution to move to an electronic identification system for official ID in cattle by 2021. Specifically, prior to discontinuation of visual only tags as official ID, a comprehensive plan is needed to address the multitude of very complex issues related to the implementation of a fully integrated electronic system. APHIS envisions developing this implementation plan with collaborative input from stakeholders, including the U.S. Animal Health Association, the National Institute of Animal Agriculture, State officials, and industry groups. The plan should focus on several key objectives, including, but not limited to, technology and data standardization, transitional solutions, a timeline for implementation, and funding.

To begin implementing this effort, APHIS will:

1. Analyze costs associated with National Uniform Eartagging System (NUES) tags to reflect the full cost associated with the manual collection of NUES numbers and the inability to retire these numbers after slaughter due to the expense compared to the cost of radio frequency identification (RFID).
2. Determine the programmatic cost of administering NUES tags and associated data entry expenditures to redirect those funds to support electronic ID and records.
3. Fund cooperative agreement projects that will provide an unbiased comparison of USDA approved RFID technologies to document their performance capabilities. The data resulting from the projects will provide cattle industry stakeholders with performance metrics to assist them in recommending the most suitable electronic ID technology standard to support the collection of traceability data, without impeding

existing management processes. Timely publication of unbiased data will enable industry stakeholders to make informed recommendations on RFID technology in various production environments for USDA's consideration. This approach builds upon industry input and support to achieve a fully compatible RFID solution for the United States.

4. Assure that data are available to State and industry partners. Consider and evaluate data from studies and feedback from stakeholders to inform a decision that provides the greatest value from Animal Disease Traceability.
5. As necessary, initiate regulatory actions for modification of title 9, *Code of Federal Regulations*, Part 86 for stakeholder needs.