

National Animal Identification Plan for Minnesota Horse Premises

Krishona Martinson, PhD, University of Minnesota



Horse Program

Providing research-based information to Minnesota Horse Owners

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HISTORY

Animal identification is not a new concept in the United States. Several livestock species have had identification processes in place since the early 1940's to indicate ownership and deter theft. It is common for horses to be branded, tattooed, registered with different breed organizations, and/or have a DNA record on file. However, there is no uniform, nationwide animal identification system in place for all livestock, which includes horses.

GOAL OF NATIONAL ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM (NAIS)

Identify all animals and premises that have had direct contact with a foreign animal disease or a domestic disease of concern within 48 hours after discovery. Ensuring animal health in the US, and thereby our ability to market animals, is the primary reason the animal agriculture industry is looking at a national, standardized, identification system.

Most individuals recognize that finding potentially sick or exposed animals early in a disease outbreak is essential to containing the disease. NAIS would allow for rapid tracing of animals during an outbreak situation, helping to limit the scope and expense of the outbreak and minimizing the impact on domestic and foreign livestock markets.

WHO GOVERNS NAIS

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is the government agency in charge of NAIS. In Minnesota, the Board of Animal Health (BAH) and State Veterinarian are working with APHIS to carryout the program.

WHAT SPECIES ARE INCLUDED IN NAIS

NAIS is being developed for animal industries that will benefit from having a system that will facilitate rapid tracing in the event of a disease concern, regardless of intended use (i.e. meat, recreational, 4-H or commercial animals). Currently, the animal groups include: llamas and alpacas, cattle and bison, deer and elk, horses, goats, sheep, poultry and swine.

WHO IS MAKING DECISIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS ON BEHALF OF THE EQUINE INDUSTRY

The Equine Species Working Group (ESWG) includes 35

representatives of the horse industry and animal health officials, including members of the major breed organizations, equine veterinarians, and University Equine Specialists. The ESGW is officially recognized by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to evaluate the concept of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) and its application to the equine industry. The group's responsibility is to develop recommendations for a national equine identification plan that is in the best interests of, and protects the rights of, horse owners and breeders.

WHAT EQUINE DISEASES WILL BE TRACKED AND REPORTED THROUGH NAIS

Serious animal diseases that affect the health of livestock and the export markets will be tracked. These include diseases that are passed within livestock species and between livestock and humans. Some diseases that affect horses, other livestock and even humans include rabies, salmonella, ringworm, anthrax, screwworm and vesicular stomatitis.

We are fortunate in our country to have high quality horse health care which limits the potential for diseases.

WHAT SHOULD MN HORSE OWNERS DO?

Obtain a Premises ID Number

Premises registration is the first priority and the backbone of the NAIS program. Any premises involved with housing or commingling of horses (or any livestock) or horse commerce and movement should register for a unique 7-digit premises id number. These include, but are not limited to: farms and ranches; hobby farms and residential properties with small horse herds; sale barns; indoor and outdoor show arenas; breeding and training facilities; vet clinics; state, county and local trails; and fair grounds. Premises id numbers are important because in a disease emergency, animal health authorities need immediate premises location data to ensure disease investigation progresses rapidly and efficiently.

HOW TO REGISTER YOUR PREMISES

Registering your premises id number is free and easy. You can register for your premise id number on-line (MN residents only) at www.bah.state.mn.us/index/nais/registration.htm. You can also contact the BAH office to register over the phone (651-296-2942, ext: 17) or be mailed a registration card. Currently, livestock owners are not required to register their premises.

CONFIDENTIALITY OF PREMISES INFORMATION

The premises information obtained (only basic information that is needed for effective disease detection and control) will be kept confidential and will only be used by federal and state animal health official to administer animal health programs at the state level and national level and during emergency situations. Minnesota has passed state legislation mandating that this information be kept confidential, unless a foreign or a domestic disease outbreak of concern occurs in the state. If a disease outbreak occurs, limited information will be given to the general public to ensure safety, limit the spread of infections, and limit the impact on livestock markets.

IDENTIFICATION OF INDIVIDUAL ANIMALS

Horses should be identified with the ISO/ANSI compatible Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chip (11784/85, 134.2 kHz), implanted in the nuchal ligament on the left side, in the middle third of the neck, halfway between the ears and the withers. It is recommended that official identification (i.e. microchip) be necessary when a horse is transported to any premises where a brand inspection, Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI), VS-127 permit, or International CVI is required. If your horse is being shipped internationally, the horse MUST BE microchipped, these are international rules and regulations.

TRACKING EQUINE MOVEMENT

Reportable movements are a major concern and topic of discussion. Because of the extensive daily movement of horses, and the possible heavy burden that would be placed on horse owners or premises managers/owners to report movement, it was recommended that the horse industry continue to rely on the current regulatory mechanisms in place. These regulations include; brand inspection, Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI), VS-127 Permit, and/or International CVI. These tracking measures will serve as the starting point for trace back in the event of a disease outbreak. Although these tracking measures may not achieve the ideal goal of the NAIS, the current practices will cover those horses at the greatest risk. These are practices currently being met by horse owners who move their horses and therefore will not require the

establishment of new business practices in the industry. It has been recommended that states standardize requirements for CVIs.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS TO THE HORSE INDUSTRY

Members of the US Horse Industry have researched NAIS and have identified additional potential benefits, other than reducing potential effects and enhancing control of disease outbreaks, they include:

1. Maintain equine commerce and movement of horses in the case of a disease outbreak.
2. Assist equestrian events in ensuring a healthy environment for participating horses. Most major events involving livestock in the United States require some sort of health certification, including negative Coggins Test. NAIS could enhance these requirements.
3. Expedite recovery and identification of horses in case of loss due to natural disaster, theft or accident.
4. Facilitate import and export of equine. Many horses are exported and imported into the United States each year. The NAIS could expedite these processes and allow for more effective means of identifying the animals moving internationally.
5. Uphold the horse industry as a responsible member of the livestock community. The importance of the horse industry in cooperating with the entire livestock industry in the case of a disease outbreak cannot be overstated.

WHO TO CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS AND USEFUL WEBSITES

To find out more about NAIS you can visit the following websites:

www.usda.gov/nais

www.equinespeciesworkinggroup.com/

Reviewers: Brenda Postels and Betsy Gilkerson, University of Minnesota.

www.extension.umn.edu

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