

NATIONAL ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM OVERVIEW

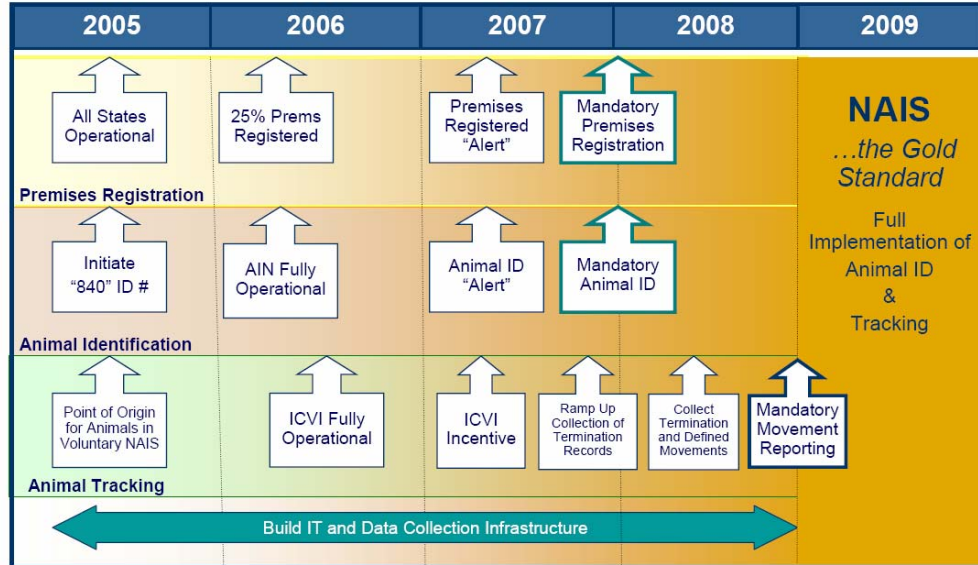
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The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) is a state and national system that, fully operational, will be capable of tracing an animal or group of animals in order to contain a disease outbreak. The goal of the NAIS is to be able to trace animals rapidly; within 48 hours of the outbreak. There are already some methods of identification and animal tracing. However, these methods heavily rely on paper records and take several days, weeks, and even months to complete traces as well as hundreds of hours of labor to track down infected animals and issue quarantines. With the NAIS in place, the process could be streamlined to identify locations of infected herds quickly as well as foresee which premises may be affected as a result.

Minnesota is a great example of why it is so important to have the ability to rapidly trace animals. In one month, Minnesota exported live animals to a total of 36 states and Canada. Since live animals are so mobile, there is potential for disease to spread just as quickly. It is essential that we have a way to track animals quickly. Without a national tracking system in place, domestic and international markets would suffer significantly should a foreign animal disease (FAD) outbreak occur. Confidence in our international buyers would go down due to lack of disease containment and inability to quickly eliminate the source of disease. The United States does and should expect imported animals and products to be disease-free and we know other countries will expect the same. To have the ability to track animals in 48 hours provides a blanket of security that our country provides quality livestock with the understanding that even if we do encounter a disease outbreak, containment will happen shortly thereafter to prevent further spread.

To make a system such as this work, there are many elements that need to be in place. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has defined the standards and framework for the NAIS, and it has been summed up in a strategic plan. The USDA's plan for the NAIS includes reasons for the program, goals, timelines, standards, and guidelines for states to begin implementation. The NAIS is currently a voluntary program, but USDA has given each state the right to institute legal requirements for portions of the NAIS (such as premises registration). The first two elements of NAIS which are premises registration and animal identification will be mandatory on a national level by January 1, 2008. The final element of the program, which is animal movement reporting, will be mandatory by January 1, 2009. It is important to keep in mind that these were the proposed dates of implementation at the time the draft was written (April 25, 2005) and there is room for adjustments if necessary. The proposed timeline is laid out in greater detail on the next page.

NAIS Timeline



The first piece, premises identification, is the foundation of the NAIS. Before we can begin tracking animal movement, we must identify locations that either house or handle livestock. This includes but is not limited to farms, auction markets, fairs, packing plants and veterinary clinics. Nationwide, there were 196,677 livestock premises registered with the NAIS as of January 30, 2006. All 50 states as well as five tribes and two territories are registering premises for the purpose of NAIS implementation.

As mentioned earlier, USDA has set the timeline and outlined the structure for the NAIS. However, each state has been given the task of implementing the program however it seems fit. In Minnesota, a steering committee was formed to get input from a wide variety of those who will be involved somehow in the NAIS. This group meets on occasion to discuss the future of our state's plan to implement the program. We also looked to USDA for cooperative agreement funds to get started with the first phase which focuses on premises registration. The only information needed to register is a contact name, the address or location of the livestock, a phone number, and the type of livestock on the premises. The number of livestock and the purpose for having them is information that is not needed for this program. As of February 8, 2006, there were about 10,500 livestock premises registered in Minnesota alone. About 1,300 of these are poultry farms. In Minnesota, you may register your premises over the phone, on-line, or by sending in a postage-paid postcard provided to you by the Board. Please see the last page of this document for contact information. Another accomplishment in Minnesota for the first year of the NAIS was development of a law to protect producer confidentiality. The law reads as follows:

- Minnesota Statutes 2004, section 13.643, is amended by adding a subdivision to read: Subd. 6. [ANIMAL PREMISES DATA.]

- (a) The following data collected and maintained by the Board of Animal Health related to registration and identification of premises and animals under chapter 35, are classified as private or nonpublic:
 - (1) the names and addresses;
 - (2) the location of the premises where animals are kept; and
 - (3) the identification number of the premises or the animal.

- The Board of Animal Health may disclose data collected under paragraph (a) to any person, agency, or to the public if the board determines that the access will aid in the law enforcement process or the protection of public or animal health or safety.

Minnesota's neighboring states are also making progress in premises registration. Wisconsin has mandatory registration and producers are to update their information on a yearly basis. So far, Wisconsin has over 42,500 premises registered (over 8,000 of these are poultry farms). Iowa has voluntary registration and currently has over 1,600 registered with over 200 of these being poultry. North Dakota also has a voluntary program with 7,000 registered so far, and South Dakota's voluntary program has generated over 3,000 registrations. Currently, in Minnesota as well as in these neighboring states, there is no fee for premises registration. For information on who to contact in your state for NAIS registration, please see the last page of this document.

The second phase of the NAIS is animal identification. On a national level, there are different species working groups that work on the development of this part of the system. Each working group will set the standards of identification and movement reporting for the species or industry group they represent. For instance, the Cattle Working Group has announced that they will use radio frequency identification (RFID) in the form of ear tags as their form of ID for the NAIS. The Equine Working Group will use RFID in the form of microchip implants for their ID. The Poultry Working Group (PWG) has decided to split off into two groups in order to address the difference between large-scale commercial operations and smaller producers. The first group is the Group/Lot ID, which will generally be the large commercial flocks. When animals move as a group all the way through the production chain, they may be able to be identified as a group rather than individually. In the NAIS program standards, the USDA proposed a group/lot ID to be the seven-digit national premises number where the group was assembled plus the six-digit date on which the group was put together, making it a 13-digit number. For instance, "004ABCD010106". This group was assembled on January 1, 2006 on premises number 004ABCD. Because of the challenge that individually identifying poultry creates, the group/lot ID is a method the PWG is considering. Flocks moving as a group within their production facility and then going directly to a plant could use the group/lot ID method. However, in order for this method to work, the group could not be commingled with other flocks outside their production facility. This is where the possibility of individual ID comes into play.

Gary Fuchs is the chair of the Individual ID Poultry Group, and they are trying to determine some of the possible methods of individual ID. According to USDA's current program standards, individual ID would probably need to be used whenever animals went to exhibition or were commingled (at markets, etc.) with animals outside their production chain. The PWG has not yet made any decisions in regards to how poultry will be identified for the NAIS. They are still looking for input from producers and other stakeholders to determine what will work best. But in New Jersey and Pennsylvania, the live bird market and the need for individual ID is something that has recently been tested by various pilot projects. For these projects, a few different forms of ID were tested, and there were a couple that may also work for use in the NAIS. One possible method is similar to the cattle back tag and is a tag simply stuck to the bird using glue developed by 3M. This method, according to the facilitator of the project, is a way to individually ID poultry for two weeks or more. Another method is a tag similar to a clothing tag and is attached to the skin in the back of the neck using a needle-like thread. Other possible forms of ID include wing or leg bands, already used for ID in some exhibitions. Even though Mr. Fuchs and the other members of the Individual ID Poultry Group are considering individual ID, they would like to work towards the possibility of flock ID instead whenever possible. Any constructive suggestions or comments on the issue of individual poultry ID would be greatly appreciated by Mr. Fuchs and the other chair members. His contact info can be found on the last page of this document.

The final phase of the NAIS, animal movement reporting, is something that has yet to be fully developed. USDA has determined that it will be the responsibility of the receiving premises to report animal movement. In other words, when an animal is brought to market, it will be the market's responsibility to report that the animal was received on the premises and on what date. However, like the issue of identification, it will be largely up to the different species working groups to find a method of reporting that works best for them. In the PWG as well as in the other species groups, the method of movement reporting cannot be finalized until methods of animal ID have been addressed and finalized.

We as a country have a lot of ground to cover before the NAIS is fully operational. There are unanswered questions and doubt as to how this program will work for everyone involved. However, the need for a system that is capable of tracing infected animals and minimizing spread of disease is something that is too important to ignore. As threat of international and domestic terrorism rise, so must our preparedness for large-scale introduction of foreign animal disease as well as disease we have been trying to eradicate for decades (such as tuberculosis and brucellosis). Please consider the importance of the NAIS and the economical, physical, and personal impact a disease outbreak could have on our country. Contact your state animal health official to register your premises and help our country be prepared for whatever lies ahead.

Thank You.

Please contact the following for further information on the NAIS in your state:

- MN 651-201-6816
- WI 608-224-4872
- IA 888-778-7675
- SD 605-773-3321
- ND 701-328-2655

Minnesota Board of Animal Health website:

www.bah.state.mn.us

USDA/APHIS website for NAIS:

<http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/index.shtml>

Mr. Gary Fuchs, Chair of the Individual ID Poultry Working Group:

Gary.fuchs@idealpoultry.com

Please email with constructive ideas/suggestions/comments