The Washington State livestock industry

Washington has a robust livestock industry with more than 1.15 million cattle alone in 2016. Both cattle and milk were among the top 10 commodities for the state with milk generating revenues of $1.1 billion in 2016 and cattle valued at $704 million.

Animal Disease Traceability or ADT

Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) is a system for rapidly tracking an animal's movements during an animal disease outbreak. The gold standard for ADT is a bookend approach, which means a system that can trace cattle from birth, record all movements, and retire the animal's individual identification tag at the end of the animal's lifespan.

Why animal disease traceability matters

An animal disease outbreak can sicken or kill livestock, require animals to be quarantined or euthanized, and sometimes pose a public health risk. Outbreaks are expensive to manage, costly to the livestock industry, and negatively impact export markets.

An effective Animal Disease Traceability system can limit the effect of a disease outbreak and lead to quicker response, containment, and recovery.

How livestock are identified today

Currently, cattle are typically identified using one or more of the following: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) metal clips, farm management tags, electronic tags, or brands. In some cases, the animals have no identification.

Radio frequency identification or RFID

Electronic identification through Radio-Frequency Identification (RFID) is the use of electronic ear tags to identify individual livestock, providing each animal a unique, permanent number. Because these are stored electronically, RFID allows for rapid tracking of an animal's movements.

One example

A 2003 case of BSE, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, in Washington State closed some foreign markets, including China, to Washington beef products. Before the closure, the U.S. provided 70 percent of China's imported beef. Losses in 2004 to the U.S. beef industry have been estimated at $3.2 billion to $4.7 billion. Investigators searched through paper records for seven days before they could trace the origin of the first infected cow.

China recently began allowing U.S. beef imports, but producers must meet certain requirements, including the ability to trace each animal to its birth farm.
What other states are doing about ADT

- **Michigan** - In 2002, implemented a mandatory ID program at livestock markets and expanded regulations for mandatory RFID before movement, including direct-to-slaughter cattle, in 2007.
- **Virginia** - In 2014, mandated that comingled cattle must be officially identified.
- **Wisconsin** - Premises Identification Number (PIN) is required for anyone who houses or co-mingles livestock, renewed every three years. Indemnity is denied without a PIN. Animals not meeting animal health requirements prior to arrival are not eligible for indemnity.
- **California** - Dairy cattle born after Jan. 1, 2017 must be officially identified prior to leaving their birth premises, unless moving directly to an approved tagging site. All dairy cattle changing ownership must have official ID.
- **Minnesota** - Official identification required when cattle are imported or moved out of a herd within the state.
- **40 states** currently use electronic health certificates that electronically report data to the State Veterinarian's Office.

What other countries are doing about ADT

Many countries have or are moving toward bookend ADT programs.

- **Canada** - mandatory RFID program for cattle and slaughter facilities since 2001; sheep, pigs, and poultry since 2006; and goats and cervids this year.
- **Mexico** - mandatory national cattle ID program in 2017.
- **Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Uruguay, and the European Union** have bookend RFID ADT programs.

Next steps

WSDA is not changing requirements for official individual identification but is proposing that official RFID ear tags be used in place of official metal identification ear tags.

WSDA is considering updating state rules regarding livestock identification to include a new requirement for cattle to have electronic identification when -

- Female cattle receive brucellosis vaccinations.
- Bulls are sampled for trichomoniasis.
- Any sexually intact cattle and bison over 18 months old is presented for sale at a public livestock market.

The change to RFID is a key step in developing an effective ADT system for Washington.

Please email us at ahealth@agr.wa.gov if you have questions about Animal Disease Traceability or our proposal.