

Beef Producers Discuss, Recommend Minimum Data for Voluntary Cooperation with Federal Animal ID Reporting

Denver, CO ----- The Producers Traceability Council met recently in Denver, CO to discuss issues around data collection for animal identification and livestock traceability.

Much of the session centered on producer privacy issues. One important point of contention is the idea that a federal database holds tag ID numbers for livestock and associates those IDs with a livestock owner's personal Premise ID, or location of their farm or ranch. Many producers feel it would be an invasion of personal privacy if this was how the system was built.

However, through discussion with USDA representatives, the Council members found that the problem may be a labeling issue, rather than a collection issue.

One of the USDA's overarching goals for increasing traceability is to advance the electronic sharing of data among federal and state animal health officials, veterinarians and industry. Sharing basic animal disease traceability data with the federal animal health events repository (AHER) allows the USDA to quickly trace sick and exposed animals to stop the spread of disease and importantly rule out which animals are not exposed. Currently, sharing information to AHER is voluntary for the states and other systems collecting it.

While in agreement that necessary information should be available to proper authorities in times of an emergency disease event, the Council examined concerns from across the livestock industry about privacy and where data should be stored. They discussed and asked questions around the issue of who else may have access to data available to AHER, as well as what information is necessary and how that information is collected and by whom.

Dr. Sarah Tomlinson, Executive Director, Strategy and Policy, Veterinary Services, APHIS, USDA and RichBaca, Director of Veterinary Services Informatics, Mapping, and Analytical Services (USDA) for ADT IT, attended the meeting to provide factual information about USDA data practices. They provided an overview of AHER and how it works in case of an animal disease event.

A primary data point collected by AHER is "Source System ID" which is a code that directs State or Federal health officials to the data system where further information is stored, such as a state database, which would only be needed in an emergency trace situation.

The USDA says that by linking to that information instead of housing it, stakeholder privacy concern is reduced, while still allowing Federal or State Animal Health Officials to look up an official ID and connect quickly to the data source.

Discussion around six data points, the Animal (Tag) ID, Event Date, Provider ID, Event Type, State and Source System ID, which are currently sent voluntarily to AHER from

participating organizations, found some confusion in the industry about what information is actually collected.

The concern expressed in the industry that personal Premise IDs are being linked to specific livestock tags in federal data bases is a privacy concern to many. However, it was made clear that an individual producer has multiple means to receive tags, such as through states or tag distributors. The USDA representatives confirmed that AHER searches are limited to state and federal health officials with access the APHIS databased used for Emergency Management Response. Additionally, when Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests are received, the federal personnel carefully evaluate and consider personal information with an interest of protecting personal privacy and confidential business information.

One data point requested to be shared with AHER is labeled "Provider ID". The USDA representatives explained it was not necessarily an ID for the location of a livestock owner's farm or ranch. Instead, it is an ID for a location associated with the event being reported. The event could be the purchase of ID tags, animal siting (such as a certification of veterinary inspection being issued for interstate movement), or retirement of a tag at slaughter. The location identified by the Provider ID could be a tag retailer, state animal health official's office, private vet's office, market, 3rd party data management company or other location responsible for records of the event, which in turn, would have information to provide for a trace. The Council discussed whether that data was needed on a federal level, as the State and System Source would also have that information. The USDA representatives stated that this information will help animal health officials quickly find information to locate where an animal has been, point toward the current location of the animal, and provide timely information pertinent to a disease investigation.

USDA representatives stated that they would provide clarification of definitions and terminology of the requested data elements for AHER which is more easily understood to external audiences.

Recommendations from the Council on what individual pieces of information should be shared with AHER will be considered after follow up and clarification from the USDA. However, there was agreement to keep the data as minimal as possible while still being effective, for ease of consistent collection as well as privacy.

Another large discussion point was about use of private data management systems. To advance animal disease traceability, the Council recommends all databases, private and public, be required to report mandated minimal data points to AHER of all tagged animals.

ADT-mandated information collected in order to move cattle across state lines will still go to state systems by law, .

The Producer Traceability Council preliminary recommendations to the livestock industry include the following consensus points on Database Liability.

Producer Traceability Council Database Consensus Points

1. In order to advance livestock traceability for emergency disease events, the minimal amount of data that is required should be collected and transferred **electronically** to the Animal Health Event Repository (AHER), meeting data standards and USDA standards for security.
2. Producers may have the flexibility and security to house data in 3rd party management systems. All data management systems should be mandated to share the minimal necessary data points with AHER.
3. As regulations change, the industry should work with policy and legal experts to further expand protection of producers' private information.

Members of the Producers Traceability Council represent the livestock value chain from across the industry and nation and include Chuck Adami, Equity Cooperative Livestock, Mike Bumgarner, United Producers, Ken Griner, Usher Land & Timber, Inc., Joe Leathers, 6666 Ranch, Jim Lovell, Green Plains Cattle Company LLC, Mr. Bob Scherer, Tyson. Dr. Justin Smith, Kansas State Veterinarian, Keith York, Wisconsin Livestock ID Consortium. Not in attendance: Jarold Callahan, Express Ranches, Cody James, International Livestock Identification Assoc.

Dr. Sarah Tomlinson (DVM), Government Liaison, USDA, APHIS, VS, a non-voting member of the Council.