

USDA - APHIS

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC COMMENTS RECEIVED DURING THE
NATIONAL ANIMAL ID PROGRAM LISTENING SESSION

FRIDAY, AUGUST 27, 2004

JOPLIN REGIONAL STOCKYARDS
CARTHAGE, MISSOURI
3:00 P.M.

IN ATTENDANCE:

BILL HAWKS, UNDER SECRETARY, MARKETING AND REGULATORY PROGRAMS

DR. VALERIE RAGAN, ASSISTANT DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR

STEVE POORE, MODERATOR

(The meeting began at 3:02 p.m. and opening comments were made by Mr. Bill Hawks and Dr. Valerie Ragan.)

MR. POORE: We'll call up the first five speakers now. Matt Teagarden, Larry Kleiner, Doran Junek, Josh Worthington, and Larry Moore. And please take your time coming down the stairs. We'll be strict on the three minutes, but take your time coming down.

MR. TEAGARDEN: Secretary Hawks, appreciate you being here. Dr. Ragan, good to see you again. I am Matt Teagarden with the Kansas Livestock Association. Our 6,000 members come from all segments of the cattle industry, and our members are keenly interested in the National Animal Identification System. I have a couple of key things that our members are concerned about.

One, Mr. Secretary, is confidentiality, so I'll be the first one to mention that today besides you, and I think you're gonna win your bet, though you had no takers. Our members are very concerned about confidentiality and believe that it is gonna be very difficult for USDA to protect that data from Freedom of Information Act requests. It's our belief that we need to keep that database in private hands, with the access that the government needs to get the health information or to do the tracking, but to keep that in private hands, some kind of industry/government oversight over that database, but keep that information in private hands. We believe that that's the only way to ensure that our members, cattle producers, other livestock producers, are protected from--from those that would want to do harm to our industry by gaining access to that information.

The other thing that we want to see is the premise allocator made available as soon as possible. We have--we have members that are ready today--actually yesterday--ready to start identifying their calves. Source verification, source identified calves are bringing a premium, and we believe that premise allocator, the premise registration numbers, will help them to start that process and meet the demand for those source-verified calves. And they would rather get started with the system that's going to be ultimately adopted than start with something else and then try to have to adapt to something new.

So those would be the two keys that we see, confidentiality and get those premise numbers available as soon as possible. Thanks.

MR. POORE: Thank you. Larry Kleiner.

MR. KLEINER: Yes. I'm Larry Kleiner with the Holstein Association USA.

This country's animal agriculture producers, including the Holstein Association's 35,000 members, are at risk today from threats of additional cases of BSE in this country and threat of foot and mouth disease. It is our belief that animal identification for production and animal agriculture in this country needs to be mandatory.

Additionally, it cannot be technology neutral. The RFID, radio frequency ID technology, is the most accurate, efficient, and cost-effective form of animal ID used in the world today and most likely will likely be for years to come.

Without a mandatory national animal identification program in this country, we will continue to be denied markets in the world for a considerable time. Currently, there are 58 countries that have banned US beef since we identified the BSE in Washington state last year.

The National FAIR program, Farm Animal Identification and Records program, which is coordinated by the Holstein Association, is an animal ID and traceability program in place and working today that incorporates RFID tags. The National FAIR program provides each animal with a unique identification number and uses electronic RFID ear tags to identify and track the animal.

The Holstein Association USA has worked cooperatively with USDA APHIS since 1999 to design, develop, and demonstrate a pilot project for the National Identification Program that will trace livestock movement from farm to farm, farm to market, and market to processing unit. The goal has been accomplished, as the National FAIR Program has been identifying and tracing animals from birth to slaughter for several years.

The National FAIR program has an infrastructure already in place consisting of a comprehensive database, a dedicated tag provider, and a coordinated field service staff. The National FAIR Program was developed by producers and for producers. Currently there are well over 1.3 million animals identified in the National FAIR database. Information that's stored securely in the National FAIR system includes where and when the animal was born, what location the animals have been at, such as farms, markets, and processing points, what livestock the animal has been in contact with.

The information in the National FAIR database allows for tracing of the animal's movements from

birth to slaughter in as little as a few minutes. As part of this system, tag readers designed to read electronic tags are already in place in markets and processing facilities throughout the country.

Ladies and gentlemen, now is not the time to reinvent the wheel. Identification needs to be implemented in the United States now. Thank you.

MR. POORE: Thank you. Doran Junek.

MR. JUNEK: Good afternoon Secretary Hawks, Dr. Valerie Ragan, and other invited guests. In my testimony I wanted to bet with you, because all three are in mine. I'd like to discuss some of our organization's key points with the National Identification Program.

Number one is, we believe it's important to clarify the intended purpose and need of an animal identification to implement effective measures and to prevent the misuse and abuse of proprietary information.

The second key point we believe is to evaluate both the costs and the benefits of implementing a National Animal ID plan, which can only be done following the completion of a comprehensive, science-based, cost-benefit analysis. Do we really need to tag and identify 100 percent when maybe 80 or 90 percent of the US cattle herd would do?

Number three is to evaluate the effectiveness of current state and regional animal identification methods that already meet the intended purpose of a National ID program and that would be easily assimilated into a nationwide plan at little to no cost, such as the plan that's going on right here at the Joplin Stockyards.

Number four is to ensure that--the overall costs of implementing a National ID Plan is going to be considerable, which, according to the United States Animal Identification Plan, is the case, then a means--maybe there are other means of allocating those costs other than strapping those costs to the US live cattle industry. According to your own USDA statistics, data shows that during the 1992-2001 decade, the average return to the United States cow/calf producer was a negative \$30.40 per bred cow per year.

And finally, to ensure that if a network infrastructure is needed to enable a National Animal ID Program, then infrastructure is designed to accommodate many other needed services in rural America rather than simply maintaining information about livestock. Such a system may allow for the sharing of

infrastructure-related costs among many industries and service providers, such as rural healthcare providers.

These are some of the key points of the Kansas Cattlemen's Association urges the USAIP group to consider as they move forward in the identification system.

MR. POORE: Thank you.

MR. MOORE: Thank you for the opportunity to voice my opinion. I'm Larry Moore. I'm a southwest regional vice president for Missouri Cattlemen Association and I'm also a cow/calf producer in Santa Clara county. I'd first like to applaud USDA for the great job they've done as far as keeping our food safe, the safest in the world here in the United States.

I worked with many agencies with the USDA during my years as a practicing veterinarian and industrial veterinarian, and I believe that most agencies right now have their plates pretty well full, so I would recommend that we also look at private sectors for storage of information.

Again, I'd like to bring out confidentiality, as was stated would be mentioned several times. I think this is a big concern of mine as well as all the cattle producers in my area.

Implementation of this program is not going to be easy. As a producer and a past market veterinarian, I see a lot of problems we need to approach and overcome to prevent interference with the present method of marketing our calves here in this part of the country. It's going to be difficult, but not impossible, to ID calves at the first movement, such as a local livestock auction market at my hometown, Osceola, Missouri. Right now it would be almost impossible for a market veterinarian to ID every calf the way the marketing system is set up before they went through the sale bin. There's a lot of those obstacles I believe we'd need to overcome.

Last but not least is the cost. Being a big concern of mine as a cow/calf producer, it looks like to me a lot of the cost is probably gonna be on the cow/calf producer. I believe we need to figure out a way for the tax credits or some other form to spread this cost about. And what we don't want to lose here in Missouri is even the smallest herd. A lot of these herds are very essential to our rural economy, to keep the local feed stores and everything else going. Again, thank you for the opportunity.

MR. POORE: Thank you. The next five speakers, Rusty Kahrs, Richard Mayfield, Carl Bastin,

Tubby Smith, and John Scorse.

MR. KAHR: Thank you. First of all, I'd like to thank Secretary Hawks for being here today to listen to us, and Dr. Ragan, we appreciate your time. Fellow producers, I sure appreciate you guys all coming to share your thoughts and ideas with the esteemed group we have here before us.

My name is Rusty Kahrs, and I'm president of the Missouri Cattlemen's Association. I represent over 3,000 producers and other people throughout the ag industry that are associate members, whether they're a livestock auction, a feed store, pharmaceutical rep, whatever. We've all combined together to come up with a policy, and let me be very clear about our policy. First of all, we do not call for an animal ID system; however, we do have four pillars that if one is put into place, we believe it should be built on.

And those four pillars are, first of all, and foremost, I think we've heard this before, confidentiality. We're gonna harp on that, and I'm gonna expand on that again here in a minute. Secondly, cost. This cost needs to be spread out from the farm to the plate, and it has to be spread out evenly across the board in order for it to be fair for everybody involved.

Thirdly, we have to have some liability issues, okay. Now, with an ID system, we'll have the capacity to trace something back from the plate all the way back to the farm. That's a concern for us, because it enhances our possibility of being held liable for something, whether we're responsible for it or not.

Fourthly, we have a great tradition of the cattle industry here in the state of Missouri and across the United States, and that tradition needs to be adhered to. We need to make whatever system we come up with fit into our traditions and business practices. That's very important.

I believe you guys have addressed some of these in your comments already, and I sure appreciate that. I appreciate the fact that you have been listening to us already and are gonna continue to do that. That's a good team that we're building here in that we're working together.

I'm gonna issue you one challenge, and that challenge is this: Missouri--and just like a lot of other states, agriculture wrestles back and forth with tourism as far as economic impact on the state for number one. So whatever you do, whatever system, Mr. Secretary, that you guys choose to come forward with, I ask you to exercise caution, take your time, make sure that this system does not adversely affect the

agricultural economy in the state of Missouri and the United States of America. That is critical.

And finally, I would ask again on the confidentiality that we not only look from a perspective of FOIA requests on a federal level, but also we're gonna have to look at state laws across the 50 states. Everybody has a different set of rules. We have different sunshine laws, different Freedom of Information laws across the state. There's a lot of groups out there, intergovernmental agencies, DNR and EPA and like that, that would love to get their hands on our proprietary information. There's a lot of other groups out there, like Sierra Club, PETA, and other agri-terrorist groups that would love to have their hands on our information as well. So, let's hold that stuff privately, let's keep it confidential and protect our interests, and that way we'll have 100 percent compliance. Thank you, gentlemen.

(Applause.)

MR. POORE: Richard Mayfield.

MR. MAYFIELD: Dr. Ragan, Secretary Hawks, I--my name is Richard Mayfield. I haven't been on the business end of a cow since I was a teenager, but I work for a human medical records management company, and I'm not gonna tell you that name, but I'm gonna provide that name for the doctor here and the secretary. But I'm not here to sell you something.

But I want to say that I saw application, and I've been working with a tissue bank tracking system. The tissue bank is out of Denver, Colorado. This is for donating tissue and organs. This company processes them. And when I saw what the FDA was doing, I said, this has got overtones and implications of the same industry. What they do is track medical tissues. They are processed and numbered and tagged much the same as the animals are.

The system that we have in place for tracking human records, your records, if your doctor has a medical practice that uses an electronic system, this system that we have is secure. It is--provides anonymity, and, at the same time, it's economical.

And--for the provider of the animal, the producer, it would be economical. It's an ASP-based system. It can be accessed through the web, and it's based through a server, so all of your records could go into one common databank or database. You would have access to that; no one else would. Just like your doctor's office.

So, for you guys, the medical industry has been working on this. I happen to work for two doctors in the St. Louis area. They are the visionaries of this company, and really, I think it has applications for what you guys are doing in trying to control disease and to provide the best price for your animals.

And I'm gonna leave you with one little anecdote that I was told a long time ago. The farmer and cattleman, his daughter was getting married, and she was marrying a New York stockbroker. So he comes out to the family ranch and sits down with Dad. Dad takes the guy out on the front porch--you may have heard this. He's looking out over all the cattle and looking at this green area, and he says, "Hey, you know, how do you like this, son?" And he goes, "I don't know. What's that god-awful smell?" And he goes, "Son, it smells like money to me."

MR. POORE: Thank you. Carl Bastin.

MR. BASTIN: Good afternoon. My name is Carl Bastin, speaking on behalf of the Missouri Farm Bureau federation, the state's largest general farm organization. My family and I own and operate a feed cattle operation near Jasper, about 40 miles north of here.

The Missouri Farm Bureau appreciates the opportunity so share our thoughts on the development and implementation of a National Animal Identification System. We commend you, Under Secretary Hawks, and the USDA for holding this series of listening sessions to gather input from livestock producers and other stakeholders, and we also thank you for the remarkable job USDA officials have done in addressing the spread of BSE and we appreciate your ongoing efforts to reopen our export markets.

Like everyone here today, Missouri Farm Bureau understands the need for animal identification to provide support for animal disease control, eradication, thereby enhancing food safety. One of the lessons learned as of December 23rd is the ability to identify and track all animals potentially exposed to disease is critical to safeguarding our industry and maintaining domestic and foreign consumer confidence in our US food supply.

We also know that development and implementation of such a system will be an enormous task and there are many critical issues to be resolved. We are pleased that the Missouri Department of Agriculture was selected to receive funding for development of the Missouri Premise Identification System. Many of Missouri's agricultural organizations plan to work together to better coordinate the program's

implementation.

However, our members' concerns continue to include cost, confidentiality, and liability, as our members frequently ask how much will animal ID cost and who will pay for the program; who will have access to the data provided to the system; and how can we ensure protection from unintended use of the data we submitted? And are producers protected from consequences of the actions of others after their animals are no longer under their control.

With regard to cost, producers realize that they will be responsible for purchasing individual animal ID tags and other items; however, they should not be burdened with an unreasonable share of the cost of creating or maintaining the animal ID system. An adequate cost-share agreement must be established between the industry and producers.

MR. POORE: Thank you. John Scorse.

MR. SCORSE: Thank you, and I appreciate getting the time. I've just got a couple of items. I'm a producer from the local area, and mainly my items are just questions related to it.

I'm trying to understand, I have a multiple state operation with multiple premises. I move cattle every week from state to state. I even have cattle that move themselves from state to state. So I have to--you know, you've been there and done that? It's not like Florida with 22,000 head. I could keep 'em running different locations throughout it, so I just want to make sure the system's flexible for that where I'm not having to sit down and document, or what will be the requirements related to that?

The other side is, I'm trying to produce a product that hopefully the consumer's gonna want. Can you help facilitate me getting data back, which is a problem, so I can improve my product? Even if I pay the cost now to send somebody in the processing lot, those animals go through and out. I'm not guaranteed I'm gonna have traceability to get that information back at this time. When--I'd like to do that, to maintain ownership. I'd like to have some assistance in that if possible. But I also understand the confidentiality others have alluded to.

The only other thing would be for embryos, the semen side of it. On the germplasm side, related to those things, when they're collected, and I transfer those and I also receive those from all over the states around there. Will we need to be keeping track of that as well? Thank you.

MR. POORE: Thank you. The next group, Jean Riffle, Lyndon Irwin, Don Nikodim, Larry Hensley, Peter Hofherr. Jean Riffle.

MS. RIFFLE: Thank you. Our Missouri Cattlewomen don't just bake cookies and serve coffee. As president of the Missouri Cattlewomen's, I greet all of you. Much of the paperwork, feed management, and check writing comes from our hands. We would like to suggest that the system remain simple, cost-effective, and easily understood. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. POORE: Thank you. Lyndon Irwin.

MR. IRWIN: Thank you. I come to you today representing the sheep industry. I served three years as president of the Missouri Sheep Producers and now sit on the executive board of the American Sheep Industry Association and also have been a member of the sheep industry working group, working on the sheep identification plans.

The American sheep industry is different from some others in that it already has an existing national mandatory ID program because of our scrapie eradication program. It's a visual system today, but as soon as an automated system is proved to work and is cost-effective for both the scrapie program needs as well as other needs, our industry's most willing to work with that and to adopt and accept that newer technology.

We are interested in seeing promising types of ID devices and systems tested on sheep during the extensive research and field trial effort. This effort needs to cover various types of production and management systems as well as transportation, handling, and marketing.

A term that we're hearing being used in regard to ID at this time is the term "mature system." The voluntary scrapie program is an example of an identification system that is nearly mature, meaning that it's been tested over time and in a variety of management systems. However, this system does not offer the level of traceability being expected by a new identification system. It appears that no system offering electronic or other acceptable traceability is yet mature or yet available for the sheep industry. The chair of our working group reminds us to remind you that sheep are not small calves.

DR. RAGAN: I know, she tells me that all the time.

MR. IRWIN: Data management, retrieval, and security are issues that need to be addressed depending upon the intended uses of the data. The device and distribution system currently used for the scrapie program has been rather efficient and effective, we feel. Many members of our industry continue to voice concerns we have heard about confidentiality, as you expected.

We understand the desire for a national identification effort. Our industry has already adapted rather well to the National Scrapie Identification Program. We urge caution in the transition to the new system and hope the transition will be patient and orderly and based on field-tested identification devices. In other words, if we are going to change, which I believe we are, let's make sure that what we change to is significantly better than what we already have. Thank you.

MR. POORE: Thank you. Don Nikodim.

MR. NIKODIM: Thank you. Secretary Hawks, Dr. Ragan, my name is Don Nikodim. I'm from Columbia, Missouri, and I'm here on behalf of the Missouri Pork Association today. I presented written comments and turned them in already, so I'll try to not belabor it and make a few summary comments.

I think over the past, producers have continued to be leaders in promoting the concept of animal ID. We think it's important and critical to food infrastructure and agriculture infrastructure here in this country, and we think Americans in general are coming to understand the importance of this, and we think they're willing to step up to the table and be a part of the cost of implementing these kinds of systems.

There are certain principles and factors that need to be considered as we move forward. One, we think it needs to be a simple, mandatory program nationwide with uniform standards. There needs to be flexibility. It needs to have an ultimate goal of 48-hour traceback. We think it needs to be credible. We think it needs to be confidential, as been said many times, and it certainly needs to be one that's not a cost burden on the producer.

Identification for transfer and tracked back to producers on the pork side, we think the lot process is the way we'd like to proceed. It makes a lot of sense in that area.

One thing we would like to express concern about was the recent rejection of the NAIS project for a swine model of livestock identification and data collection. There was a lot of work that went into this program. We think there's a lot of things to be gained from that, and we'd like to use this opportunity to

call for additional competitive grant funding to allow the pork industry to move forward in this area.

Bottom line, an affordable program that doesn't put onerous requirements on producers is extremely important as we develop this system. If we can do it in that format, we think it can be a real advantage to the entire livestock sector.

MR. POORE: Thank you. Larry Hensley.

MR. HENSLEY: My name is Larry Hensley. I live in Kinta, Oklahoma. That is in the southeast part of the state. For the past 25 years or so, I've belonged to the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association and the National Cattlemen's Association likewise. I'm proud of my membership in the Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association. It's been an important part of my life.

However, I'm not here today to speak on behalf of either organization. I'm here to speak for myself, my wife, Janice, my neighbors who join me on all sides, and my neighbor's neighbors, who join them on all sides. This makes a pretty large area in our little corner of the world.

So, speaking for this group, I would like to say we support mandatory animal identification. I would like to give you one example of what I expect from the program. My wife and I have a cow/calf operation, and that ranch is our sole source of income. Our cattle herd has provided the income to raise and educate our three children, and we're proud of that. Sometimes we sell our calves right off the cows; sometimes we back 'em and precondition 'em. Sometimes we graze 'em awhile. But we always sell 'em to someone else who takes them and goes in different directions.

If a major health problem was developed with one or more of our calves as it moves through the chain, I want our state veterinarian, Dr. Healey, to be knocking on my door the next morning saying, "Larry, you might have a problem. I'm here to help you with it." I don't want him to have to quarantine the whole state of Oklahoma because he has no idea where the problem came from. I want him to use the information from mandatory animal identification records to come to my door and give me help.

I'm not afraid to be responsible for my products. Mandatory animal identification does not need to be bolted down with so many regulations that it strangles the program. Keep it simple, make it mandatory so all can benefit from it. Mandatory programs do work. The bangs program is a good example of a mandatory program. I wonder where we would be with the bangs program today if a few folks had been

allowed to stay outside the program and move their bangs-infected, untested animals around all over the United States?

Today the American consumer has a high level of confidence in the American food system. Let's not lose this by not being able to quickly address the problem should one occur. I thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. POORE: Thank you. Peter Hofherr.

MR. HOFHERR: Thank you, Steve. Mr. Secretary, Dr. Ragan, as the Director of Agriculture I wanted to welcome you to Missouri. About 50 percent of the value of agriculture is in livestock, so naturally what happens here concerns all of us. We're hearing a lot of great comments today from our associations and producers, and, for us, that's the most important thing.

See, we think that Missourians have a lot of common sense, and we think this is just the first part of a long road to implementation. As my mom told me a long time ago, haste makes waste. So let's go slow, let's learn from the pilot projects that we have going around the country, and then I invite you to come back to Missouri as my official guest and do another one of these sessions to hear how it's going when we start to implement some of this. I think it's wonderful that you're here, and I think maybe a couple visits to Missouri wouldn't hurt you any, get you out of Washington and get you out here.

So, welcome to Missouri, and if there's anything we can do to help you while you're here, of course, our doors are open to you.

(Applause.)

MR. POORE: I have six more names on this so I'm gonna call you all down to speak. Don Lucietta, Toni Freeman, Bill Ross, Howard Hardecke, Randee Schwartz-Locke, and Terry Chapman.

MR. POORE: Toni Freeman.

MS. FREEMAN: Hello. My name is Toni Freeman. I come to you as an electronic records manager. Though many ID systems considered recently used an electronic tag, one system mentioned over the last year or so utilizes an independent source verifier that will be certified by the USDA to compile records used in verifying history and origin of animals yet enabling the producer themselves to remain virtually technology free and minimize their cost. Are we likely to see this type of system implemented in

the near future, and doesn't it offer a more feasible approach for the smaller producer and auction?

MR. POORE: Thank you. Bill Ross.

MR. ROSS: My name is Bill Ross, and my wife and I operate a cow/calf ranch down on the edge of Arkansas, and I'm probably like many of you that our deal is spread over several different placers. We have five different places, not that we're that big, but the places are just small.

So one of my big concern is the premise number and keeping up with five different premise numbers. Not that we can't do that, but as of right now, if you asked me where calf 456 is, I can tell you. And if you ask me about where calf 356 was from last year, I probably couldn't tell you, but I could go back and tell you where he was when we sold him.

So, I don't know that we necessarily need to have five numbers. Now, I can understand that someone owns these cattle and lives somewhere else, but there's got to be a farm or ranch manager that's responsible for those. It looks like to me maybe just one number might work.

I don't know really what your concerns are about the confidentiality or security, but just a number that we all have or that we're in common with, I don't know. You tell us not to give our Social Security numbers out, but it's on everything. I don't know why we couldn't just use Social Security number. And we've all got a drivers license. I don't know why we can't just use my drivers license number. That would just--put an AR in front of it. Every state has its prefix. Just something simple. The lady said it while ago, just keep the thing as simple as you can and as least problems and effort as we're gonna have to put into it.

MR. HARDECKE: Thank you. I'm Howard Hardecke, first vice president of the Missouri Cattlemen's Association. Secretary Hawks, appreciate you coming down our way to talk to us today and show this program. I'm not going to go over the same things that Rusty did a while ago about the four pillars that we stand firmly on.

We do want to make the cost to be such that it doesn't interfere with a lot of the small producers. That's our big concern. Missouri's average cattle herd is about 35 head, and we feel like very strongly this should be a program, as Jean said a while ago, that's very simple, that even the small producers can work with.

Education and outreach. You mentioned this in your presentation a while ago. We feel very

strongly that this has got to be a very important aspect of this program. Because of the number of small producers that we have in this area, we've got to inform them all about what's going on, because it's gonna be--as this thing gets further and further along, we know that the rumors and misinformation is gonna be what we're battling as much as anything. So it'll be--education and outreach, we feel, is a very important aspect of it.

This other point that I want to mention today has not been mentioned. We feel very strongly that the animal ID should be a globally compatible program, because as most of you know, these diseases are not just usually diseases from our own country. These are worldwide. And so whatever animal ID program we come up with has got to be something that is globally compatible.

And then these are just some questions that have been brought to me from the producers in the state. What about animals that are in transits? What about animals at fairs? What about animals at rodeos, things like this? How are these going to be addressed? Thank you.

MS. SCHWARTZ-LOCKE: Thank you for coming down. It has been very informative. Most of my list of questions are gone. I would like to suggest if you make another--next time you make a meeting, though, you have a meeting that would enable those of us ranchers or farmers who work off the land can make it. I know it would be an imposition, but a weekend or an evening would probably be very appreciated. My husband would have loved to be here today, but he can't afford to give up a day's salary.

I'd like to know, what other expenses are we going to incur that we haven't been told about, such as requirements of various stockyards, purebred associations, once you install this program, whatever it be.

My husband and I are very much in favor of the National ID System. My husband used to ranch in upstate New York, grew up on his family's ranch for over 150 years, and they have an ID system. But in today's day and age, we often need to be ID'd for the end user in the retail store. If you know how the retail butchers work, you have to have DNA testing. These tags are not gonna go past the time the animal is slaughtered. The ears come off, the tags fall off if they haven't fallen off in the pasture already.

Another problem, I'd like to know how we're going to guarantee that once my calf leaves my premises, that the ear tags will not be removed and put on somebody else's cattle. That's--we need that protection. There are enough people--well, I know of people who have questioned cattle they bought that

the paperwork and what they ended up with calves don't match. I see a lot of people are shaking their heads. This is a problem. I don't want to spend over \$2 more an ear tag than I have to spend now and then find out that when I sell my cattle, I sold it to somebody who's unscrupulous, and they're gonna put that ear tag on their beef, who may not be from a disease free state, and it's gonna come back to me.

And the other thing is, as far as our confidentiality, I don't believe our confidentiality will ever be ensured until whatever law goes into effect, it has been to the Supreme Court for a decision, and I mean a well-fought fight from the USDA. Thank you.

MR. POORE: Thank you. Terry Chapman.

MR. CHAPMAN: Secretary Hawks, Dr. Ragan, we appreciate y'all coming and listening to us. In my remarks, I apologize, I'm probably gonna say the same thing that just about everybody else has. I might just say it a little bit different. I'm Terry Chapman with Livestock Marketing Association. I serve as regional executive officer and executive secretary for Oklahoma, Arkansas, and part of Kansas livestock markets.

Livestock market operators and the LMA staff have been a part of the USDA or US Animal Health ID development team that has been developing the standards for a National Animal ID System. There is growing recognition within our industry that we may need a better animal identification and traceback system than we have today in the event of a foreign animal disease outbreak or an act of terrorism.

This does not mean, however, that there is not great concern about its cost. Who is going to pay for the equipment and the infrastructure to make it work and the security of the information generated by the system? In one single good-sized market in Michigan where an electronic ID system was put in to verify and identify all of the cattle moving through the market, nearly \$60,000 was spent putting in the scanning equipment, refitting alleyways and upgrading the computer software.

And this was just for the initial installment. It doesn't account for the additional personnel, workman's compensation, upkeep, et cetera, that will be needed as well to maintain the system.

The greatest job as auction marketplace in identifying every animal that moves through the markets is doing so at the speed of commerce. If this thing, the National ID System, is--in any way slows

down our normal speed of operation, we're going to have a much higher operating cost. Producers will seek other ways of marketing their livestock, and the impact of the livestock industry that will be seen far beyond the marketing sector.

Right now, given the likelihood that many animals will come to the markets untagged, that most of the small producers, not having the equipment to do it themselves, and the limited availability of technology to scan animals quickly through the markets, we anticipate that implementing the national ID System that allows timely marketing of animals will be extremely difficult.

We realize that many are interested in moving ahead with a mandatory National ID System immediately. However, if we do so without knowing the cost for building the system's infrastructure and who will bear those costs or we do so without first making sure the right technology and equipment are available to livestock markets, packers, and veterinarians, we can expect the ID system to fail and the ultimate cost of that failure to be great.

We should consider one additional thing, to be sure to identify all cattle or all livestock of foreign origin that are here in the US now before we start any national ID system. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. POORE: Thank you. That's all the speakers that I have listed.

(Additional comments were made by Mr. Hawks and Dr. Ragan, and the meeting was adjourned at 5:00 p.m.)