

How NAIS Works

There are three components of NAIS:

Premises registration

A premises is the geographic location where animals are raised, housed, or boarded. Obtaining a premises identification number (PIN) in no way obligates participation in the other NAIS components.

Animal identification

Identifying animals with a unique number, either individually or as a group/lot depending on species, is essential for traceability. The NAIS animal identification number (AIN) remains with the animal for its lifetime. As the transition to NAIS occurs over time, USDA will continue to recognize all official identification numbers and devices currently existing. No previously recognized USDA official numbering system will be discontinued in the near future. Animals that are already officially identified do not need to be retagged with NAIS-compliant devices. NAIS Species Working Groups, composed of State, Federal, and industry representatives, have developed recommendations for acceptable identification methods for each of their respective animal species.

Animal tracing

Access to timely, accurate records that document animal movement activity and identify exposures in the event of an animal health event is fundamental to traceability. Animal owners have the ability to report animal movements that pose a risk of disease transmission or exposure to State or private Animal Tracking Databases (ATDs). The more events that are reported, the more complete the record of movement, and the greater the ability to trace a disease in the event of an outbreak.

Premises Registration

The concept of identifying premises is not new. Like animal identification, Federal-State animal health programs have utilized numbers to locate herds and flocks for decades, but the numbers were often specific to a certain disease program. For example, when a herd was tested for brucellosis or tuberculosis, it would be entered into a generic database at the State level using location identifiers unique to the brucellosis or tuberculosis disease program.

Problems occurred with this approach because there was no way to prevent more than one herd record from being created for a single location, short of the data entry person completing an exhaustive search across multiple systems. Inconsistency in naming operations could also cause problems. For instance, if “Smith Farms” was entered into the brucellosis database, it might also be entered into the tuberculosis database as “Smith and Sons, Ltd.” or “S & S Farms.”

One goal of NAIS is to standardize the identification of premises across the United States—by establishing a consistent, national data format—so that animal health officials can locate producers quickly in a given area. This is vital to quickly containing animal diseases.

For the purposes of NAIS, a “premises” is the geographic location where animals are raised, housed, or boarded. Such locations include farms, ranches, other production units, veterinary clinics, markets, abattoirs (harvest facilities), rendering facilities, ports of entry, laboratories, boarding facilities, exhibitions, and any other location where livestock and poultry are kept. The goal of premises registration is to establish a complete record of all locations, or premises, in the United States that manage or hold livestock and/or poultry.



Obtaining a PIN

All animal owners and veterinary clinics that have handling facilities for large animals are encouraged to obtain a PIN, regardless of the number of animals present, because many animal diseases (such as avian influenza, foot-and-mouth disease, and vesicular stomatitis) can spread whether an animal leaves its home premises or not. Premises registration forms are available on many State department of agriculture Web sites, or by contacting the State, Territory, or Tribal NAIS Administrator by mail or phone. State animal health authorities are also available to answer any questions about premises registration and/or the application process. The USDA NAIS Web site has an interactive map with a link to each of the 50 States; to request a PIN, visit: www.usda.gov/nais/getPIN. In addition, each State has a NAIS Administrator; to access this directory, visit: http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/contact_us/directories.shtml

PREMISES REGISTRATION

KEY POINTS

- Premises Registration provides the opportunity for producers who are not a part of a disease program to voluntarily participate in national animal health safeguarding efforts. (States have the right to mandate participation, and some do.)
- It is free.
- The application process is quick and simple. It requires completing a short form with contact information. From this information, a nationally unique PIN is assigned.
- Individuals' private information and confidential business information is protected from disclosure by Federal law.
- Obtaining a PIN does not obligate participation in the other two components of NAIS.



The Premises Identification Number

When a livestock producer, animal owner, veterinary clinic, or other individual/entity requests a PIN, a nationally unique, seven-digit alpha-numeric code is permanently assigned to the geophysical location by a national allocator that validates that location. An example of a PIN would be A123R69.

Similar to a rural 911 address used by first responders to pinpoint the location of an emergency, the PIN allows animal health officials to quickly locate animals that might be affected by an animal disease event.

If there is no mailing address at the property, geographic coordinates—latitude and longitude—and driving directions from the closest major highway intersection can be used instead to describe the location. (This does not provide any satellite tracking capability of either animals or people living at the premises.)

How PINs Work

Knowing where animals are actually located (premises identification) and how to reach owners and veterinarians is fundamental to an animal disease traceability system that supports a rapid, accurate, and cost-effective animal disease response. Premises information can also be used to quickly define which regions of our country are not affected by an outbreak—keeping markets open for unaffected producers and preventing unnecessary movement restrictions.

Obtaining a PIN ensures that animal owners and veterinarians receive the information they need to protect their animals and their investments in the event of a disease outbreak or natural disaster. When needed, animal health officials will be able to quickly locate affected and at-risk animals and take precise actions to address the situation, minimize hardships, and speed disease control and/or eradication efforts as much as possible.



PINs in Action

In 2006, Colorado animal health officials used premises data to quickly locate livestock and contact producers in blizzard-affected areas to better meet animal and producers' needs. Additionally, because many of the roads were impassable, helicopters were able to locate farms using their geophysical coordinates and drop much-needed feed to the animals.

Wisconsin was the first State to mandate premises registration. Because of this, animal health officials were able to notify horse owners in the area rapidly when West Nile virus was diagnosed.



Change of Ownership or Participation in Premises Registration

If an owner sells his/her farm, ranch, or veterinary clinic, the next owner will use the original PIN that was assigned to that location and update the contact information. If a PIN had not been previously assigned, the new owner can obtain a PIN for that location. To find out if the location has already been assigned a PIN, contact the State, Territory, or Tribal NAIS Administrator.

If, for some reason, you or your client decides to no longer participate in premises registration, there is a procedure to opt out and remove your PIN from the system. Contact your State, Territory, or Tribal NAIS Administrator for more details.

Information Associated With PINs

When an individual requests a PIN, the following pieces of information are collected and stored in the National Premises Information Repository (NPIR):

- Premises identification number (PIN);
- Name of entity;
- Owner or appropriate contact person;
- Street address, city, State, and Zip or postal code (or latitude/longitude coordinates) of the premises;
- Contact phone number;
- Operation type (e.g, farm, ranch, veterinary clinic, market, packing plant, abattoir, boarding facility, rendering facility, port of entry, laboratory, exhibit, etc.);
- Species at premises;
- Date activated, date retired, and the reason retired (to determine whether animals still exist at the location); and,
- Alternative phone numbers.

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For single site operations, the farm name is an appropriate entity. For multiple site operations, names such as “home place, dry lot, north pasture, feed lot, or sow farm” could be used.

USDA has established only minimum standards; each State, Territory, or Tribe may have additional information requirements for premises registration. That additional data will be maintained at the State, Territorial, or Tribal level. USDA will not maintain any additional data on participants in the NPIR beyond the required fields of information listed above.

The Need For More Than One PIN

As a veterinarian, you might work with large-scale livestock operations that conduct business as a single entity but have animals in multiple, geographically distinct locations. Your veterinary practice might also involve several different locations that are managed under a single business name. Consequently, livestock owners and veterinarians might need to consider having multiple PINs—one for each of the distinct operation or business locations. To determine if more than one PIN is needed, livestock owners and veterinarians should consult with State, Territory, or Tribal animal health officials. State, Territory, or Tribal animal health officials will take into account many factors that could indicate a need for multiple PINs. They might consider:

1

Commingling of animals: In a large-scale operation or business that has more than one location where animals of various origins and health status are housed, even if only for short periods of time, State, Territory, or Tribal animal health officials may recommend a PIN for each location.

2

Permanence: A unique PIN may be issued for each geographically distinct location within a single operation or business that has permanent livestock facilities, such as pens, corrals, stables, sale rings, or buildings.

3

Area livestock density: In an effort to establish a true epidemiologic picture of an area where livestock are densely populated, State, Territory, or Tribal animal health officials may recommend assigning a PIN to each of the business or operation locations that fall inside that geographic area.

4

Animal movement between locations: Large-scale operations or businesses that frequently and routinely move animals from one geographically distinct location to another within the operation may need a PIN for each location—especially if the movements present a risk of disease transmission to other livestock in the area. On the other hand, even if there is no animal movement between geographically distinct locations within an operation, State, Territory, or Tribal animal health officials may still recommend a separate PIN for each location.



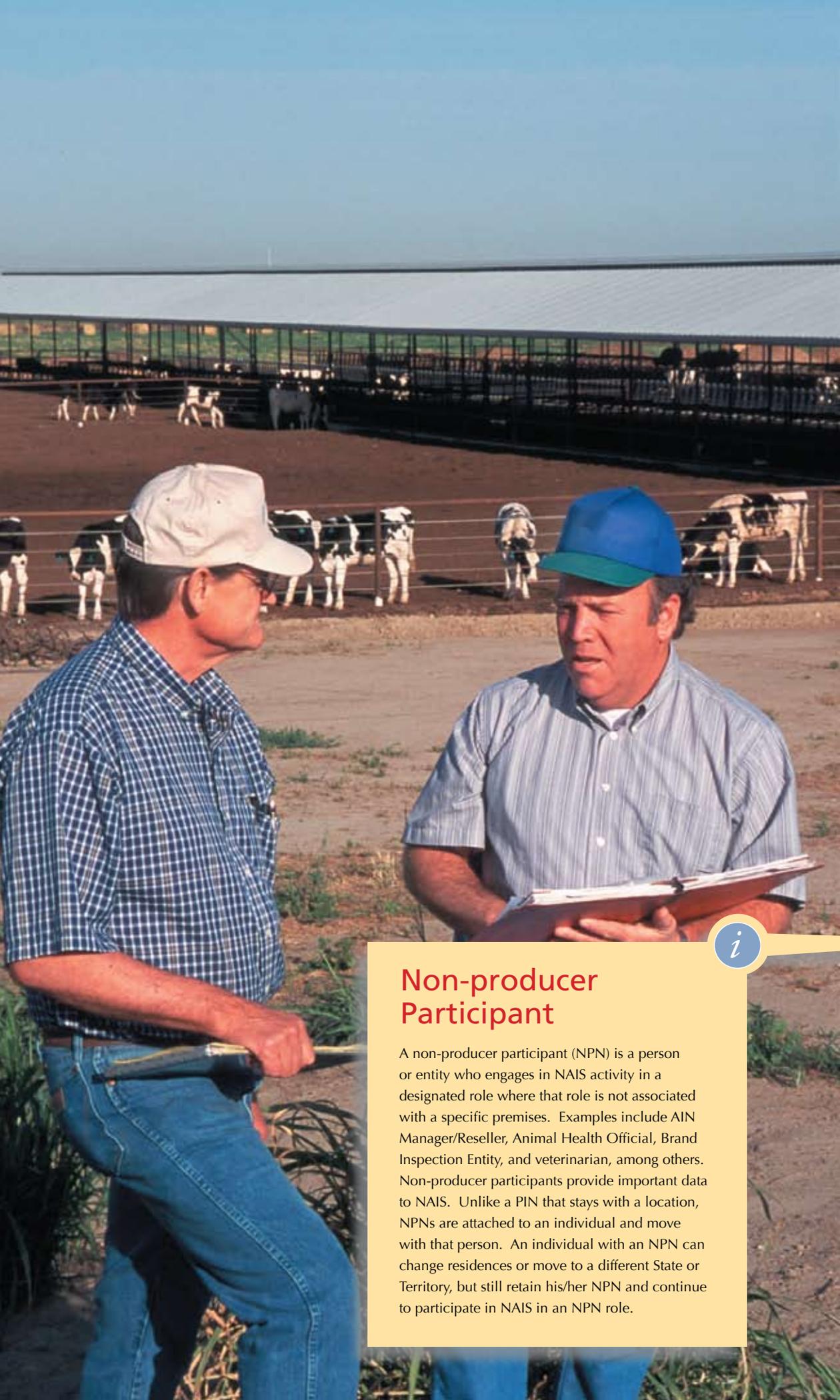
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Geographic separation: Because the risk of disease exposure from and transmission to other livestock operations increases when animals are moved longer distances, State, Territory, or Tribal animal health officials might recommend that operations or businesses that manage multiple, geographically dispersed locations get a PIN for each location.

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Proximity to other livestock operations: When determining if a separate PIN is needed for each geographically distinct location within a single operation or business entity, State, Territory, or Tribal animal health officials will consider each location's proximity to other livestock operations and the potential for contact with other livestock in the area. Locations that have close contact with a neighboring operation or that are situated along a route routinely used for animal movements would likely require separate PINs.

As NAIS continues to develop, more States, Territories, and Tribes may require the PIN on Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (CVI). Many States have already changed their CVI forms to capture this information, and it is now becoming a national standard. PINs may also be used on international health certificates. Even though only some Federal forms currently used in program disease work request PIN information, it is important to be aware that State and Federal forms will change in the future as NAIS standards are adopted for all official animal disease program work. Until that change happens, it is good practice to record a location's PIN (if available) on official forms as additional information.



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Non-producer Participant

A non-producer participant (NPN) is a person or entity who engages in NAIS activity in a designated role where that role is not associated with a specific premises. Examples include AIN Manager/Reseller, Animal Health Official, Brand Inspection Entity, and veterinarian, among others. Non-producer participants provide important data to NAIS. Unlike a PIN that stays with a location, NPNs are attached to an individual and move with that person. An individual with an NPN can change residences or move to a different State or Territory, but still retain his/her NPN and continue to participate in NAIS in an NPN role.



Role of the Veterinarian in Premises Registration

As an accredited veterinarian, it is important to understand the process of premises registration to be able to explain it to your clients. By obtaining a PIN for your veterinary clinic, you are promoting NAIS and setting an example for your clients about its importance for traceability and the prevention of disease spread. Requesting a PIN for yourself will also enhance your familiarity with the process so that you can comfortably assist your clients. Veterinary clinics will be an important resource in the event of an animal health emergency.

Registering a Premises as an Authorized Agent

In a very few States, Territories, and Tribes, you may also act as an authorized agent and offer premises registration as a service to your clients. To act as an authorized agent, you will first need to register yourself in the system as a non-producer participant (NPN) or obtain a PIN for your clinic. For details on this process, check with your State, Territory, or Tribal NAIS Administrator.



Animal Identification

The second component of NAIS is animal identification, which provides a nationally unique numbering system for identifying animals. Animals can be officially identified individually or as a group, depending on the species. Owners should identify their animals before the animals leave their home premises and enter commerce, or before they are moved from their home premises to another location where the possibility of commingling with other animals presents an increased risk of disease transfer or exposure (such as livestock exhibitions, sporting events, auction markets, feedlots, etc.).

Official animal identification devices that are compliant with NAIS standards are available for most species. See http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/animal_id/index.shtml and select "AIN Devices" in the Quick Downloads box on the right for a list of devices available for the following species: Cattle and Bison, Swine, Sheep and Goats, Cervids (deer and elk), Equines (horses, mules, donkeys, burros), and Camelids (llamas and alpacas).

Household pets (cats and dogs) are not included in NAIS.

ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION

KEY POINTS

Animal identification serves a variety of purposes in surveillance and disease control.

- Electronic health certificates or Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (eCVIs) require official animal identification, and the number assigned by NAIS can be used to meet this requirement.
- When testing animals as part of a surveillance program for diseases such as tuberculosis or pseudorabies, official individual identification is required because of its importance in providing the means to follow up on positive or negative animals.
- Healthy or non-exposed animals may be officially identified as part of a regionalization or compartmentalization approach following an outbreak to facilitate business continuity.
- Animals are officially identified to show they have been vaccinated for a regulated disease, such as brucellosis.
- Official identification must be used for animals that have reacted positively to a test for a regulated disease.



Individual Animal Identification Number (AIN)

The individual animal identification number (AIN) is an official, unique, 15-digit number that stays with the animal for its lifetime. The AIN is imprinted on identification devices with a space between every third digit to improve readability. For example: 840 234 567 890 123

- The first three digits of the AIN comprise the country code—840 is the United States country code and is assigned by the International Committee on Animal Recording (ICAR).

The AIN provides a unique identifier for the animal anywhere in the world. The 15-digit number is required on all official AIN devices and will soon be required on certain USDA forms. The AIN Management System initially associates the AIN with the PIN from the animal's premises of origin—either its birthplace or where it was first identified. This serves as the starting point for the animal in the system—and these data (the AIN and associated PIN) remain in the Federal database.

Ideally, the AIN is attached to the animal before it leaves its current premises. However, some owners may elect to attach AINs at birth and utilize them in their on-farm recordkeeping system. Animals that are born, raised, and housed on the same location and that do not enter commerce may not need to be officially identified unless the owner so chooses.

NAIS Species Working Groups continue to evaluate and recommend which identification devices and methods work best for their species/industry and will help determine appropriate standards for USDA official identification devices and methods.

Group/Lot Identification Number (GIN)

Animals that typically move through the production chain as a group of animals of the same species, as is common in the swine or poultry industries, can be identified by GINs, rather than individual numbers. However, this option is not restricted to swine and poultry, as it may also apply to other specific animal groups. An animal removed from the group should be identified individually if it will be making **reportable movements** (e.g., to a veterinary clinic for treatment or to a livestock show). Once animals are commingled, they are no longer being maintained as a separate group. Even if animals are kept in the same pen (i.e., at a feedlot or auction market), they are on a different premises and are considered commingled by virtue of exposure to pathogens via aerosol, water sources, or alleyway trafficking, among other potential indirect transmission routes.



Reportable Movements

Reportable movements are those that impact the spread of animal diseases. Examples include commingling animals on another facility or moving animals to an auction or market, national/regional exhibitions, or sporting events. Reportable animal movement activity will be defined by State, Territorial, Tribal and Federal animal health officials.



The group identification number (GIN) is a 15-character number. For example: A23456710030204

- The first seven numbers and/or letters are the seven-character PIN of the location where the group is being created.
- The next six numbers are the date the group was assembled in MMDDYY format—in this case, on October 3, 2002.
- The last two numbers reflect the count of groups assembled at the same premises on the same day (starting with 01)—in this case, the fourth group assembled on October 3, 2002, at premises A234567.

The GIN is not assigned by USDA; rather, it is “self-generated” by the producer at the premises for animals at that location based on the format described above. It is also maintained by the producer in his/her management records, not by USDA or States, Territories, or Tribes. The Species Working Groups will provide more recommendations on a species basis about how group movements should be maintained and/or reported.

Types of Acceptable Individual Animal Identification

The official numbering system used in NAIS can be used with all disease programs for a variety of species and offers enhanced traceability. However, USDA has utilized official identification for years in various animal disease programs. There are several formats for official identification currently in use.

As the transition to NAIS occurs over time, USDA will continue to recognize all official identification numbers and devices currently existing. No previously recognized USDA official numbering system will be discontinued in the near future. For example, animals currently identified through official programs like the National Scrapie Eradication Program do not need to be re-identified for NAIS, even though the owners may have acquired a PIN in addition to a scrapie flock number.

USDA official numbering systems for individual animal identification include, but are not limited to:

National Uniform Eartagging System

- Brucellosis calfhood vaccinations (orange tags)
- Tuberculosis testing (bright tags)

Flock Identification Number with a unique herd management number

- National Scrapie Eradication Program

Animal Identification Number (AIN)

- Chronic wasting disease, tuberculosis, and brucellosis

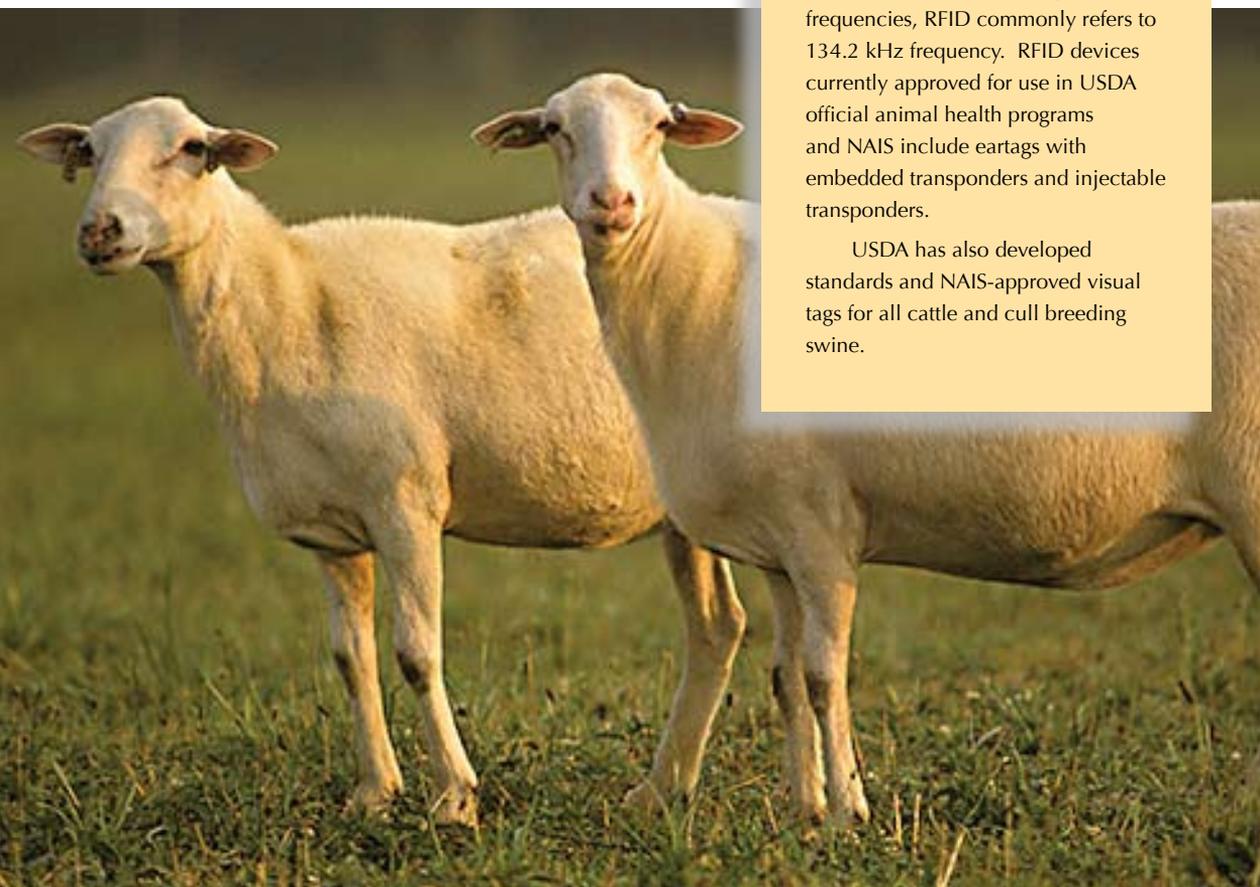
Cattle and sheep are typically identified with either a visual or **radio frequency identification** (RFID) (134.2kHz) eartag while horses, llamas, alpacas, and other species may be identified with an injectable, RFID [134.2 kHz (NAIS) or 125 kHz (non-NAIS)] device.

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Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)

RFID is a device that utilizes radio frequency technology. While RFID can encompass a wide range of frequencies, RFID commonly refers to 134.2 kHz frequency. RFID devices currently approved for use in USDA official animal health programs and NAIS include eartags with embedded transponders and injectable transponders.

USDA has also developed standards and NAIS-approved visual tags for all cattle and cull breeding swine.



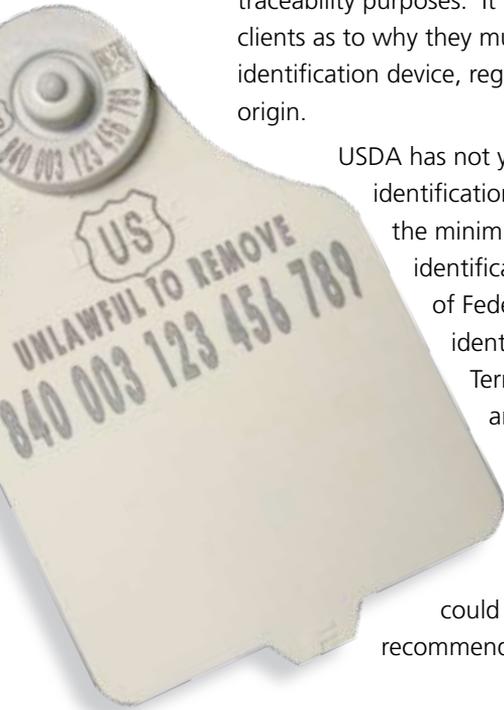
Individual Animal Identification Devices

It is unlawful to remove USDA official animal identification devices/tags. It is also unlawful to remove official country identification device(s)/tags(s) from imported animals. These official country identification devices/tags are critical for traceability purposes. It is important to educate clients as to why they must not remove any official identification device, regardless of the country of origin.

USDA has not yet designated any specific identification technologies beyond the minimum requirements for official identification that have been described in the Code of Federal Regulations. However, official animal identification requirements can vary at the State, Territory, or Tribal level, so be sure and check with animal health authorities in your State, Territory, or Tribe for more information.

As more information becomes available on the various technologies for animal identification, the Species Working Groups could alter their recommendations. For now, they recommend the following:

- Cattle – RFID ear tag attachment should be placed in the left ear.
- Bison – undetermined at this time.
- Equine – RFID (injectable transponders) should be implanted in the nuchal ligament on the left side, in the middle third of the neck, halfway between the ears and the withers.
- Sheep & Goats – official forms of identification should follow the guidelines set forth in the Uniform Methods and Rules for the National Scrapie Eradication Program.
- Cervids – undetermined at this time.
- Camelids – undetermined at this time, but RFID injectable transponders implanted at the base of the ear are currently used in various breed registries.
- Swine and Poultry – animals in many of these production settings would be identified as group/lot rather than individually, but identification devices can be provided when individual animal ID is warranted (e.g., show pigs, cull sows, and boars).



Obtaining Individual Animal Identification Devices

1

Obtain a PIN

- Before individual animals can be identified, the producer or animal owner must first obtain a PIN. The PIN is linked to all of the AINs for that location.

2

Contact an AIN Manager for official identification devices

- AIN Managers have agreements with manufacturers that have been authorized by USDA to distribute devices that include AINs.
- As a veterinarian, you can become an AIN Device Manager/Reseller or distributor; contact your State animal health office or visit the NAIS Web site for more information at http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/naislibrary/documents/guidelines/Steps_for_Becoming_an_AIN_Device_Manager.pdf.
- Each manufacturer is allocated specific AINs to ensure that the uniqueness of that number is maintained.
- The AIN Management System Web page lists authorized AIN devices, their manufacturers, and the species for which they are recommended at http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/animal_id/ain_mngt_sys.shtml. USDA updates the page as additional manufacturers are authorized, so you should check back periodically for more options.

3

Provide your PIN to the AIN Manager

- The manager will validate the PIN.
- The devices will be shipped or delivered to the premises.

4

Inspect the official AIN devices upon arrival

- Official AIN devices (with the exception of injectable transponders) must contain:
 - The 15-digit animal identification number (AIN),
 - The U.S. Shield, 
 - The words, "UNLAWFUL TO REMOVE."
- The approved device manufacturer is required to imprint or engrave its trademark or logo on the device.

Applying Identification Devices

NAIS identification devices may be applied whenever preferred by the producer, but no later than when the animals leave the premises for treatment, a livestock show, a sporting event, a market or auction, or to go to another person's farm or ranch, unless moved directly to an official tagging site. Becoming approved as an Official Tagging Site could enable you to provide a service for your clients that could easily be tied to other herd health services. [For more information about becoming an Official Tagging Site, contact your State NAIS Administrator at http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/contact_us/directories.shtml.]

If there are extra devices/tags left over once all of the animals on a premises have been identified, the materials should be stored in a secure location. Under no circumstances should extra devices/tags be given or sold to another producer, because all purchased AIN tags are linked in the AIN Management Information System to the PIN for the location where they were shipped or delivered.

Lost/Malfunctioning Identification Devices

In the event that an animal loses its official identification, it should be re-identified as soon as possible. Ideally, the previous number along with the new number should be recorded in the information system (e.g., noted in the owner's production records or to the Animal Tracking Database [ATD], if data with the original AIN were previously submitted). If an animal was purchased, and its original number is not known, the person responsible for the animal should document the new identification number and as much detail about the animal as possible in his/her production records.

If the RFID tag malfunctions, the animal should also be re-identified with a new device in a timely manner. Again, the new number along with the previous number should be recorded and reported to the information system (ATD).

RFID field application issues, such as tag retention, proper placement on the animal, and temperature effects, were reviewed in USDA-funded Pilot Projects from 2005 through 2007. More information about these projects is available at http://animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/naislibrary/documents/plans_reports/PilotProjectReportFINAL05-01-2007.pdf.