

# Introduction to NAIS

NAIS is a State-Federal-Industry partnership designed to

- Increase the United States' animal disease response capabilities
- Limit the spread of animal diseases
- Minimize animal losses and economic impact associated with disease outbreaks
- Protect producers' livelihoods
- Maintain market access

USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) introduced NAIS in 2004 to enhance the United States' capability to minimize the spread of foreign and domestic animal diseases of concern by implementing a modern, streamlined information system. Participation is voluntary at the Federal level.

While many States have information systems in place to locate at-risk animals and premises during a disease outbreak, they are not connected nationally nor do they collect consistent information. NAIS standards provide a uniform system for officially identifying multiple animal species so that producers and animal health officials can respond quickly and effectively to animal health events in the United States.

Historically, official animal identification has been incorporated into Federal and State animal health programs for the control and eradication of diseases such as brucellosis, pseudorabies, and tuberculosis. As the prevalence of these diseases has decreased, so has the use of USDA-issued eartags and other forms of unique, individual animal identification. As a result, fewer of the Nation's animals are identified, leaving a void in standardized, official animal identification and decreasing the United States' ability to investigate animal disease incidence and exposure.



## The Need for NAIS

From 2002 to 2006, an average of 4.1 million vaccinated heifers were tagged each year with official USDA-issued eartags as part of the bovine brucellosis eradication program. This represents an estimated 25 to 27 percent of eligible breeding cattle annually during that timeframe. In comparison, there were 9.2 million heifers vaccinated in 1992. This is a 55 percent decline in the number of heifers officially identified with the orange metal brucellosis vaccination tags.

In 2006, the estimated 10-year-old beef cow that was diagnosed with bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in Alabama did not possess an eartag, a tattoo, or a brand. Efforts to associate the animal with potential source herds via DNA analysis were also unsuccessful. In all, State and Federal animal health officials investigated 37 farms based upon all available information, and none could be definitively identified as the source of the animal in question.

Source: USDA Alabama BSE Investigation  
Final Epidemiology Report, May 2, 2006, available at:  
[http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot\\_issues/bse/downloads/EPI\\_Final5-2-06.pdf](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot_issues/bse/downloads/EPI_Final5-2-06.pdf)

## Benefit of NAIS

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Rapid response has a number of economic benefits. Any producer whose premises has been impacted by disease can attest to the serious losses and hardships that result—loss of animals and livelihoods, the labor and time involved with eradication, decreased incomes, lost jobs, and sometimes the loss of irreplaceable breeding stock/bloodlines. The quicker and more effectively a disease is contained, the less chance it has to spread to additional premises, including those of your clients. When fewer producers are affected by disease, the economic strain is reduced. NAIS offers the ability to quickly generate detailed data showing the scope of a disease outbreak. The ability to accurately show which regions of the country are and are not affected by a disease outbreak (sometimes called compartmentalization or regionalization) is a valuable tool that can be used to prevent widespread market and animal export closures.

NAIS also has the ability to bring economic benefits to the U.S. economy as a whole by facilitating rapid response. Rapid response depends upon animal disease **traceability**.



### Traceability

Traceability defined by the World Organization for Animal Health, or OIE, is broad in scope and spans the life of an animal—from birth until it reaches the consumer (birth to plate). The goal of NAIS is to advance animal disease traceability in the United States by giving animal health officials the information they need to quickly and effectively trace the movements of an infected animal from birth to harvest.





## The Need for NAIS

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From October 2005 through August 2007, the timeframe to trace back 27 bovine tuberculosis cases discovered during routine harvest surveillance averaged 199 days (start to finish). The sooner animal health officials can identify the specific locations of affected animals and determine their movement history, the sooner affected and possibly exposed animals can be tested and the traceback completed.

The 10-month effort to eradicate exotic Newcastle disease in 2002 through 2003 cost nearly \$400 million by the time direct and indirect costs were calculated. This included nearly \$1 million lost income per week due to export sanctions. Reducing the time it takes to eradicate a disease by several months—or even several weeks—can save millions of dollars in costs for producers, veterinarians, the Government, and consumers.

## Maintaining Domestic and Foreign Markets

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Many of our international trading partners have implemented some form of official identification for their production facilities and animals, and they require the same of their trading partners. NAIS allows U.S. producers to share that advantage in the marketplace. Although your clients might not engage directly in international marketing, the prices garnered for U.S. livestock through trade negotiations directly influence domestic livestock prices.

Becoming a part of NAIS is beneficial from the standpoint of retaining domestic and international market status, particularly in the face of an outbreak. A single report of disease can shut down consumer demand for U.S. products. In 2003, when the United States diagnosed its first case of BSE from an imported cow, foreign beef trade dropped 80 percent. To try and regain access to foreign markets, USDA put in place enhanced BSE surveillance at a cost of approximately \$189 million. To maintain and protect prices for domestic commodities, it is crucial for international markets to stay open.

The United States is fortunate to be free of many diseases faced by livestock producers in other parts of the world. Your clients might feel they have a very healthy herd, and signing up for NAIS might not seem that important. In today's market, however, the ability to prove negative status of our Nation's animals to our trading partners via surveillance becomes important. A single rumor of a foreign animal disease has caused markets to plummet in the past, due in part to the potential far-reaching consequences it could have on international trade. Having the ability to quickly define which regions of our country are—and are not—affected by an outbreak (compartmentalization) is another important reason to participate in NAIS.



## 840 Devices

NAIS-compliant devices/tags, sometimes called “840” devices/ tags, come in a variety of forms. The first three digits (840) are the U.S. country code. Eartags are available as visual-only or can incorporate radio frequency technology. Injectable transponders also are available for non-food animals such as horses. Regardless of the form, each device uses the NAIS standardized 15-digit numbering system to create an internationally unique official animal identification number (AIN). The AIN stays with the animal throughout its life.



## Role of the Veterinarian in NAIS

As an accredited veterinarian, you already play a role in advancing traceability for animal diseases each time you complete a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (CVI) for animals traveling interstate or health certificates for animals traveling internationally. The *Code of Federal Regulations* currently requires various forms of “official” identification depending on the class and type of animals in interstate commerce and for State/Federal Cooperative animal disease programs. This will not change as NAIS evolves. However, as the system develops, there are other opportunities for you to participate. Some examples include:

- Assisting your clients with obtaining a premises identification number, or PIN,
- Serving as a manager/reseller (in some States) of official NAIS-approved devices/tags (also known as “840” devices/tags),
- Providing a tagging service using NAIS-approved devices/tags for your clients as part of herd health, and
- Assisting clients in using official ID as part of value-added traceability programs, such as USDA’s Process Verified Programs (PVPs) and Quality System Assessment (QSAs).