

NAIS: Benefit or Burden?

Common NAIS Myths

- *“The NAIS will burden small farmers and homesteaders and make it impossible for them to own and raise livestock.”*
- *“The NAIS only benefits large farmers; no one else can afford to implement it.”*
- *“Homesteaders who raise their own meat, and even people with just a one-egg hen, will also have to register their homes as premises, identify all their animals and submit all the paperwork and fees.”*

Introduction

Premises registration is the foundation of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). In a disease outbreak or other animal health event, animal health officials cannot help producers protect their animals if they don't know they are there. Contact information provided during premises registration ensures producers are notified quickly when a disease event might put their animals at risk. Opening the lines of communication between producers and animal health officials is critical in preventing disease spread.

Premises registration is carried out by the States and Tribes. USDA maintains only limited premises registration information. Federal law protects individuals' private information from disclosure. Misinformation about the effect of NAIS and premises registration on the individual producer has caused widespread concern.

Producers who do not sell livestock for a living are among those who question the value of NAIS. A closer look at the facts behind the NAIS will help to answer questions and ease concerns.

Costs and Requirements

Premises registration is free.

Registration is voluntary at the Federal level. Therefore, the Federal government will not levy any fines or otherwise penalize producers if they choose not to participate. Each State or Tribe can choose to keep premises registration voluntary or not, based on local needs.

Disease Risk

Premises registration can benefit anyone who maintains livestock, whether they own a large or small operation. The source, timing and severity of a disease outbreak or other animal health event are impossible to predict. That's why all producers need to know that first responders can notify them when a disease situation might put their animals at risk. Registering a premises does not automatically enroll a producer in the other components of NAIS. Producers can decide, based on their particular needs or preferences, whether to participate in the other two components of NAIS: animal identification and animal tracing. If their animals move to or have been at locations where they come into contact with animals from

multiple/other premises, the potential impact on the spread of disease is increased. In these situations, producers may decide that animal identification and tracing benefits them. Producers who raise animals only for their own consumption rarely commingle their livestock with others. These livestock are often only transported for custom slaughter. Since they do not come into contact with, or commingle, with animals from other locations, they do not need to be identified for the purposes of NAIS. As long as the premises is registered, the producer will be quickly contacted and warned about the risk of disease exposure.

Premises registration, and NAIS as a whole, must account for the concerns of all farmers. An animal disease can impact any operation of any size. Therefore, all producers and livestock and poultry owners must be equally concerned about animal disease control programs.

Every Animal and Every Movement?

Some producers now believe that every animal they own must be identified, and that a report must be filed every time they move animals to other premises. This is not the case. In fact, the cost of implementing such an all-encompassing system would outweigh the benefit of combating animal disease. To be effective, producers and animal health officials must work together to prioritize disease control activities. Many small farmers, homesteaders, and others outside the

commercial livestock industry never transport animals to premises where they are commingled with animals from other premises. Animal identification, relative to animal disease control programs, may provide little or no benefit in these situations.

Specific livestock species are included in the NAIS because of the risk of these animals being affected by domestic and foreign diseases:

- Cattle/bison
- Goats
- Poultry
- Cervids (deer and elk)
- Swine
- Equines (horses, mules, donkeys, burros)
- Sheep
- Camelids (llamas and alpacas)

Household pets (cats and dogs) and animal species not listed above are not included in NAIS.

To provide guidance for all producers, the USDA has developed a comprehensive document about the NAIS. Ask your State or Tribal NAIS Administrator for a copy of the November 2006 User Guide or go to the NAIS Web site at www.usda.gov/nais for a copy of the document.

Additional Information

For more information about NAIS, contact:

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