What is animal disease traceability?

Animal disease traceability, or knowing where diseased and at-risk animals are, where they've been, and when, is very important to ensuring a rapid response when animal disease events take place. Animal disease traceability does not prevent disease; yet, an efficient and accurate traceability system helps reduce the number of animals involved in a disease investigation and reduces the time needed to respond.

In the United States, there is no system-wide mandatory national animal identification system. The largest federal program is the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) program, which became effective in March 2013.

ADT Program: In Brief

The ADT program establishes minimum national official identification and documentation requirements for the traceability of livestock moving interstate; some states and Tribal nations have more stringent requirements in place and are responsible for the traceability of livestock within their jurisdictions. Individual companies and industry programs work to fill gaps in the current ADT system.

ADT requires that livestock moved interstate be officially identified and accompanied by an interstate certificate of veterinary inspection (ICVI) or other documentation, such as an owner-shipper statement or a brand certificate. Covered livestock include cattle and bison, horses, poultry, sheep and goats, swine, and captive cervids.

As currently structured, ADT is a “bookend” system, which enables animal health officials to trace a covered animal forward from the location of official identification and backward from the animal’s last location, which is often the termination point or slaughter plant.

Beef cattle under 18 months of age, unless they are moved interstate for shows, exhibitions, rodeos, or recreational events, are exempt from the official identification requirement in this rule. Consequently, feeder and fed cattle remain exempt.

To adapt to changing technology, APHIS has taken steps to modernize the ADT program. One example of this is the agency’s requirement that beginning January 1, 2023, beef and dairy cattle and bison moving interstate must bear electronic tags that use radio frequency identification, as opposed to metal tags. Feeder and fed cattle are also exempt from this requirement.
Traceability in the U.S. Hides and Skins Industry

THE LACK OF A SYSTEM-WIDE MANDATORY NATIONAL ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM creates challenges for the hides, skins and leather industry after it received the byproduct from the meat packer. In an effort to help remedy this situation, the U.S. Hide, Skin and Leather Association is developing a new voluntary industry traceability program that will allow U.S. hides and skins to be traced back to the meat packer or hide processor of origin. The program, which should be finalized in 2019, will be certified by the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service.

RESOURCES:
- USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
- Plan to achieve EID factsheet