

USDA Issues Final Animal Traceability Rule

WASHINGTON (USDA) — The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a final rule establishing general regulations for improving the traceability of U.S. livestock moving interstate.

"With the final rule announced today, the United States now has a flexible, effective animal disease traceability system for livestock moving interstate, without undue burdens for ranchers and U.S. livestock businesses," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "The final rule meets the diverse needs of the countryside where states and tribes can develop systems for tracking animals that work best for them and their producers, while addressing any gaps in our overall disease response efforts. Over the past several years, USDA has listened carefully to America's farmers and ranchers, working collaboratively to establish a system of tools and safeguards that will help us target when and where animal diseases occur, and help us respond quickly."

Under the final rule, unless specifically exempted, livestock moved interstate would have to be officially identified and accompanied by an interstate certificate of veterinary inspection or other documentation, such as owner-shipper statements or brand certificates.

After considering the public comments received, the final rule has several differences from the proposed rule issued in August 2011. These include:

- Accepting the use of brands, tattoos and brand registration as official identification when accepted by the shipping and receiving States or Tribes
- Permanently maintaining the use of backtags as an alternative to official eartags for cattle and bison moved directly to slaughter
- Accepting movement documentation other than an Interstate Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (ICVI) for all ages and classes of cattle when accepted by the shipping and receiving States or Tribes
- Clarifying that all livestock moved interstate to a custom slaughter facility are exempt from the regulations
- Exempting chicks moved interstate from a hatchery from the official identification requirements

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. These specific traceability requirements for this group will be addressed in separate rulemaking, allowing APHIS to work closely with industry to ensure the effective implementation of the identification requirements.

For more specific details about the regulation and how it will affect producers, visit

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www.aphis.usda.gov/traceability [1].

Animal disease traceability, or knowing where diseased and at-risk animals are, where they've been, and when, is very important to ensure a rapid response when animal disease events take place. An efficient and accurate animal disease traceability system helps reduce the number of animals involved in an investigation, reduces the time needed to respond, and decreases the cost to producers and the government.

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