



BARTON OPPOSES The National Animal Identification System (NAIS)

My study of the issue has led me to the belief that the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) is not good for independent farmers and ranchers. It will do little to protect our food supply. It is not in the best interest of the United States. It is not in the best interest of Oklahoma.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in its DRAFT: Strategic Plan 2005-2009 states, "The strongest driving force for developing the NAIS is the risk of an outbreak of a foreign animal disease (FAD)." Where is the research that identifies weaknesses in our current monitoring systems? Where are the evaluations and recommendations regarding the regulations that govern the importation of animals into the United States? Who has identified the need for NAIS, other than technology companies and large agriculture corporations? Why is the USDA reducing testing for Mad Cow by 90%? Have we ever had an outbreak of disease or contamination that we have not been able to trace to its original source? NO! We have even found the original source of e coli in spinach!

Corporate entities, especially those wishing to participate in specific export markets, will benefit from NAIS. Many large producers will meet the criteria for Group Identification Numbers (GIN) since their animals are frequently moved as a unit through the production process. Most small producers will be required to use individual Animal Identification Numbers since their animals will not meet the criteria for GIN.

Technology companies, many of whom have participated in the development of the standards for the NAIS, will benefit from the mandatory implementation of NAIS. Technology companies will design and maintain the massive databases required to monitor premise registration, animal identification and movement. Technology companies will also benefit from the design, manufacturing and sale of the tags themselves.

The monetary price tag for NAIS is unknown. It appears that no cost analysis has been done. Or at least none that is readily available to the public. Someone will pay for the design and maintenance of databases. Someone will pay for the tags. That someone will be small producers and consumers. That someone will be 4H and FFA members whose families will be forced to participate in a mandatory monitoring system even if they are not otherwise involved in raising livestock, so that their child can raise a pig, a cow, etc. What happens to the young boy or girl who wants to take his/her pet rabbit to the county fair?

Non-monetary costs are also unknown. The very act of Premise Registration and reporting of animal movements guarantees a loss of privacy. The “secure” databases used to store premise information and records of animal movements will be as vulnerable as all of the other “secure” databases that have been compromised due to human error, hacking or flaws within the system itself. The proposed tags are noted as “reprogrammable.” The tags are supposed to be numbered for specific herds or individual animals, but it appears that anyone with the savvy to determine the means for this reprogramming violate the protection these tags or computer chips are supposed to create. In fact, in England a process of “cloning” these chips has already been accomplished.

According to Liberty Ark Coalition:

“RFID chips can be reprogrammed or even infected with viruses. Want to place the blame for a sick animal on someone else? Just reprogram the tag. Want to create chaos at a livestock auction? Infect the tags with viruses. Want to steal a horse? Simply destroy the microchip embedded in the horses’ nick and insert a counterfeit one of your own.”

This does not sound like a “safe” or responsible way to protect our food supply, our farmers and ranchers or our privacy.

I strongly encourage all citizens to educate themselves on this issue. If not stopped, the mandatory implementation of NAIS by January 2009 will have an impact on you. Read the material available from the USDA. Read what groups such as The Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance and the Liberty Ark Coalition have to say on the issue. I think each of you will be as concerned about this issue as I am.

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