

Understanding ID

by Jason Ewing, NJHA director

The beef industry is ever changing with new producer-oriented programs being developed each year. As active, educated members of the National Junior Hereford Association (NJHA) we must keep abreast of these programs and realize how we as junior members fit in some of the programs' parameters.

As many of you already know the current national identification (ID) program is strictly voluntary, with few premiums in place at the present time to justify the additional time, labor and cost of identifying your animals from conception to consumption. However, the American Hereford Association (AHA) and Certified Hereford Beef (CHB) LLC are working together to offer incentives through the Hereford Verified program. Hereford Verified offers various options to satisfy the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) requirements, and offer more substantial premiums on Hereford cattle that go through the program.

Many of you may wonder what are some of the goals and requirements of the NAIS. The goals of the NAIS, as seen by the National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA) are:

- Meeting the government's needs for a complete traceback within 48 hours for animal disease investigation and surveillance.
- Maintaining the confidentiality of information on animal movements and ownership in private hands — thereby keeping it free from Freedom of Information Act requirements of state and federal governments.
- Providing animal ownership data, source verification and movement information to the government on specific animals that are involved in a given investigation or surveillance.
- Providing a commercial information exchange infrastructure for ID.

Hereford Verified is positioned to help achieve these goals as well as to provide real carcass data on the animals that are enrolled in the Hereford Verified program. The resulting data is available to producers to allow for selection of superior carcass

genetics, which result in additional profits to producers who utilize the program.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is planning to have the NAIS mandatory by 2008. To date there are no actions or regulations in place that will mandate the NAIS to take effect. Even so, a national ID program will only strengthen the market for the beef raised on your farm or ranch. There are three phases of implementing the NAIS:

1. Development of premises systems: The premises ID phase of the NAIS is now being implemented by USDA and each state's animal health department. It acts as the foundation for the entire NAIS.
2. Development of an identification database: This is the backbone of the NAIS and the focus of NCBA's and other species groups' efforts.
3. Implementation of the NAIS throughout the industry: The most difficult and expensive phase of the process, this will require a coordinated effort between all segments of the industry, USDA, state governments and service providers.

Implementing this program is going to be an expensive, but necessary task. With the program being optional at the moment, progressive breeders are able to get a foot in the door and begin receiving premiums for their effort ahead of the curve. This is where the Hereford Verified program plays a vital role by allowing Hereford breeders and their bull customers added premiums.

The genetic opportunities by being involved in Hereford Verified are boundless, as producers will have the tools necessary to trace actual carcass data. Not only will the real data allow for better genetic selection, it will add valued meaning to carcass expected progeny differences (EPDs). Hereford Verified will allow producers the opportunity to better select animals that will produce profitable offspring when sent to the rail. For more information about Hereford Verified visit www.herefordverified.com. For more information about NAIS, visit www.animalid.aphis.usda.gov/nais/index.shtml or www.beefusa.org. **HW**

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