

Montana Cattlemen's Association

Press Release

Release Date: February 5, 2010
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Montana Cattlemen's Association Pleased With USDA's New Framework for Animal Disease Traceback

MCA (February 5, 2010) - Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack has announced a new framework for animal disease traceability and Montana Cattlemen's Association (MCA) says it welcomes the news. MCA has been a vocal opponent of the previously proposed National Animal Identification System (NAIS).

In a public statement and subsequent conference call with industry groups on February 5, the Secretary said the agency intends to be responsive to producer concerns and will work towards a program that allows state and tribal animal health officials to drive a system that will work for them. A cornerstone of the program will be enhanced protections against the introduction and spread of animal diseases.

"I've decided to revise the prior policy and offer a new approach to animal disease traceability with changes that respond directly to the feedback we have heard," said Vilsack. "We are committed to working in partnership with states, tribal nations and the industry in the coming months to address many of the details of this framework," said Vilsack. The rule-making process is scheduled to begin in mid-March when animal health officials from states and tribes will meet in Kansas City to begin dialogue on the program.

Secretary Vilsack said USDA will work towards a system that will provide the following basic tenets of improved animal disease traceability capabilities:

- The program will be administered by states and tribal nations to provide more flexibility.
- The program will apply only to animals moved in interstate commerce.
- The program will encourage the use of lower-cost technology.
- The program will be implemented transparently and through federal regulations coupled with a full rule-making process, allowing for public comment.

MCA Vice President and Animal ID Chairman Hugh Broadus, Forsyth, MT said, "This reversal of policy is refreshing. Putting control of animal disease prevention and traceback into the hands of state and tribal animal health officials puts producers closer to the development of the system as well as the end product that will emerge. For a variety of reasons, states have different needs regarding animal health issues. Animal disease traceback cannot be a one-size-fits-all system, and that's been a fundamental problem with the previous approach. Montana Cattlemen look forward to working with state and national officials to develop a system that will work without unnecessary burdens or risk. We appreciate Secretary Vilsack's attention and responsiveness on this issue."

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