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USDA Announces Publication of Cattle Tagging Program

- **New rule being published by the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service will require electronic identification ear tags for dairy, and some beef, cattle**

in 180 days.

- **Such EID tags come with LF or UHF RFID chips, to be read with handheld or fixed RFID readers.**

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA's) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) has announced new regulations for cattle tagging that requires an electronic (EID) ear tag. The rule is expected to be published in the federal register in May and will be effective 180 days after publication. Currently, the only approved electronically readable official ID tags are RFID tags.

The rule results from goals the USDA established years ago to increase traceability of cattle to protect against livestock disease outbreaks. According to USDA officials, the agency is committed to implementing a modern traceability system that will identify and track animals from birth to slaughter.

The pending requirement narrows in on sexually intact cattle and bison that are 18 months of age or older, all dairy cattle, and any cattle or bison used for rodeo or recreation events.

Reducing Disruptive Processes

Traditional animal identification requires users to visually read the printed number on a metal ear tag. Metal tags require manual data entry, increasing the likelihood of transcription errors.

The manual process can also be disruptive to normal herd operations, increase stress on the animals, and increase the risk of injury to animals and handlers, according to the USDA.

EID ear tags enable faster and more accurate animal identification data collection, USDA officials proclaim. One of the advantages they point to is the ability for veterinarians to gain information more efficiently with less disruption to the animals or the overall herd, and thus less

impact on producers and communities.

Millions of Cattle to be Tagged

Currently, the U.S. cattle and bison herd fluctuates between 85 million and 100 million animals annually, including some bison and cattle that move between states but are exempt from official ID requirements.

With the new rule each cow—within the dictated type and age categories—will require an ear tag with a visual ID as well as electronic RFID chip. If a cow has already been tagged with a visual-only official identification tag prior to the rule's effective date, producers are not required to apply an electronically readable tag to the animal.

All visual-only official identification tags applied to cattle and bison prior to the date the rule is effective will be considered official identification for the lifetime of the animal.

LF and UHF RFID for Electronic Tags

Approved devices for EIDs include 134.2 kHz LF RFID tags compliant with both the 11784 and 11785 ISO standards, or UHF RFID tags. APHIS has provided official ID tags for many years. Beginning in 2020, it provided up to eight million LF RFID button tags each year for state animal health officials for use in monitoring cattle and bison in their states.

APHIS does not recommend specific tag providers, but tag companies may submit specific products—encoded with a 15-digit official ID number beginning with “840,” the ISO country code for the United States—to APHIS for approval. The agency maintains a list of approved tag providers.

Where and how RFID cattle tags are read varies based on production practices. Those practices include how producers sell their animals, and how they maintain their records. In some cases, cattle producers already read RFID tags as part of

their own records-management and production practices, or they may choose to do so only for official ID purposes.

Additionally, APHIS reports, veterinarians have been using RFID in some scenarios. Most accredited veterinarians work for private veterinary businesses or private practices, as opposed to the USDA. Some, however, use the collected RFID data to upload and track animal health information that can be managed and accessed by the USDA.

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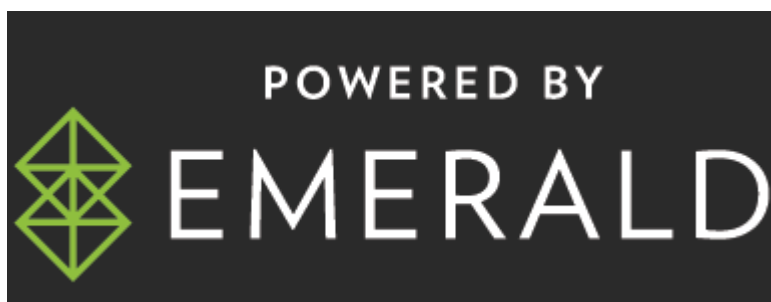
- USDA's APHIS Program Plans Revisions to Animal IDs
- RFID and Camera Technology Beef Up Cattle Management
- Why the Cattle Industry Shouldn't have a Beef with RFID Technology



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