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**Equine Species Working Group
NAIS Recommendations to USDA
August 1, 2006**

Identification Recommendations:

Premises Identification:

1. A premises is defined as a physical location that represents a unique and describable geographic entity where activity affecting the health and/or traceability of animals may occur. The State Animal Health Official or Area Veterinarian in charge (and when appropriate, in conjunction with the affected producer) determines what is a premises.

Animal Identification:

2. To enhance disease surveillance through a successful identification and tracing program, states should standardize requirements for Certificate of Veterinary Inspection. At the time Certificates of Veterinary Inspection are written, horses should be identified with an official form of identification that includes the AIN, any electronic identification and a more complete description of the horse's coat color, white markings, any unique identifying marks, including cowlicks, brands and tattoos or digital photographs.
3. Official identification is necessary when a horse is transported to any premises where a brand inspection, Certificate of Veterinary Inspection, VS 127 permit, or International Certificate of Veterinary Inspection is required.
4. When appropriate, the NAIS should incorporate all current forms of equine identification, especially radio frequency identification devices (RFID), normally microchips. Existing microchips should be incorporated in to the NAIS for equines.

From now on, the ISO/ANSI compatible RFID chip (11784/85, 134.2 kHz) is the recommended standard of electronic equine identification to control disease and for uniformity and compatibility necessary to achieve the goals of NAIS.

Microchips should be implanted in the nuchal ligament on the left side, in the middle third of the neck, halfway between the ears and the withers.

RFID reader and scanner manufacturers and suppliers should make an immediate effort to provide readers and scanners that can read ISO/ANSI 11784/11785 livestock microchips, and read or at least detect all 125 kHz frequency companion animal microchips.

5. New technologies should be pursued and researched to provide more efficient, cost effective and accurate methods of equine identification, i.e., Biometrics, DNA Testing, etc.
6. The buyer and seller, as a condition of trade, shall be responsible to report change of ownership of an equine to the appropriate equine registries and databases that record equine identities.

Data Reporting Recommendation:

7. Equine movements will not be reported. In the event traceback is needed, animal health officials will rely on the current system of maintaining brand inspection records, Certificates of Veterinary Inspection, VS 127 permits that are kept on file at the appropriate brand or state office or on the International Certificates of Veterinary Inspection that are currently recorded by APHIS VS. States and USDA are encouraged to move these forms into an electronic format to expedite retrieval.

General Recommendations:

8. Any state or national equine identification program should encompass an initial voluntary implementation period to ensure proper testing of the program's components and to allow sufficient time to educate horse owners and other stakeholders. The information warehoused in USDA-approved identification and tracking databases must be FOIA-exempt. Equine identification, if mandated, should not be implemented before 2010 unless disease outbreaks necessitate earlier compliance.
9. Horses are livestock. However, the USDA must recognize the unique characteristics of the equine industry as it develops the NAIS. Here are the primary and unique characteristics of horses:
 - a. Have longest life expectancy of livestock species (20 – 35 years).
 - b. Are generally more valuable on an individual basis.
 - c. Are transported more often and for greater distances.
 - d. Participate in internationally recognized competitions including the Olympics.
 - e. Require accurate identification to insure the integrity of a multi-billion dollar racing industry with state regulated pari-mutuel wagering.
 - f. Are imported and exported on a regularly basis at significant expense.
 - g. Are at great risk of theft.
 - h. And, are in many instances already properly identified by the appropriate breed registry or horse identification services.

10. The equine-related components of the NAIS should provide definitive benefits to the horse industry that exceeds the cost to stakeholders.
11. The USDA should encourage those with inquiries, recommendations or grant proposals pertaining to a national equine identification program to contact the Equine Species Working Group for collaboration.
12. When practical, the NAIS should be compatible with other nations, especially Canada and Mexico.
13. To ensure that the horse owners and industry stakeholders do not unduly bear the costs of the development and implementation of a national equine identification program, the USDA should pursue funding for cooperative agreements that include equine field trials recommended by the ESWG, and adequate funding for assistance to implement the National Equine Identification Program.
14. USDA-approved identification and movement databases must be exempt from FOIA requirements, including an exemption to block data from passing among varied governmental agencies. Only approved federal and state health authorities will have access to the NAIS-approved databases essential to the enhancement of animal disease surveillance and monitoring that is maintained by state, federal, or privately managed database.