

 **NEWS RELEASE**

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
4700 River Road, Riverdale, MD 20737-1232 • Voice (301) 734-7799 • Web: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov>

Joelle Schelhaus (301) 734-0595

Jerry Redding (202) 720-4623

USDA PROPOSES TO AMEND LIVESTOCK REGULATIONS TO ENHANCE ANIMAL DISEASE TRACEABILITY

WASHINGTON, Jan. 12, 2009--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is proposing to amend its domestic livestock regulations in order to enhance the traceability of animals in the United States. These proposed changes would create greater standardization and uniformity of official numbering systems and eartags used in both animal disease programs and the National Animal Identification System (NAIS).

USDA is proposing to recognize only animal identification numbers (AINs) beginning with the 840 prefix, which represents the U.S. country code, as official for use on eartags applied to animals born on or after one year or more after the finalization of this rule. AINs with USA and manufacturer code prefixes imprinted on the eartags would no longer be recognized as official identification numbers for such animals; however, animals that are already tagged would not have to be retagged. An interim rule, published on Sept. 18, 2008, prohibits the use of 840 AINs on animals born outside of the United States. Other animal identification numbering systems currently authorized for use on official eartags would continue to be recognized as official identification. These include the National Uniform Eartagging System and premises-based numbering systems that combine a premises identification number (PIN) with a producer's livestock production numbering system.

USDA is also proposing to require, on or after the effective date of this rule, that all new premises identification numbers (PINs) use the seven-character alphanumeric code format instead of the state postal abbreviation. Identification eartags that employ a premises-based numbering system applied to animals one year or later after the date on which this proposed rule is finalized must employ the seven-character format.

Finally, USDA is proposing several changes pertaining to the use of the U.S. shield on official eartags; numbering systems that use such eartags; and the correlation of those numbering systems with the PIN. This would require that both AIN tags and official identification tags used in disease programs would only be issued to premises that have valid PINs.

In the NAIS business plan, which outlines the program's goals and strategies for the next 3-5 years, the immediate focus is on increasing the quantity of animals identified and traceable to their premises of origin, especially in the sectors with the lowest existing traceability levels, namely cattle. These proposed amendments are the next step in the development of a nationally integrated, modern animal disease response system. With a standardized system of numbering and use of uniform tags across USDA's animal disease programs and the NAIS, animal health

officials will be better equipped to locate and trace diseased and exposed animals during an animal health event. Obtaining this information quickly will significantly minimize the spread of the disease and its impact on producers.

This action is scheduled for publication in the Jan. 13 *Federal Register*.

Consideration will be given to comments received on or before March 16. Send two copies of postal mail or commercial delivery comments to Docket No. APHIS-2007-0096, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. If you wish to submit a comment using the Internet, go to the Federal eRulemaking portal at <http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=APHIS-2007-0096>.

Comments are posted on the Regulations.gov Web site and may also be reviewed at USDA, Room 1141, South Building, 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. To facilitate entry into the comment reading room, please call (202) 690-2817.

#

Note to Reporters: USDA news releases, program announcements and media advisories are available on the Internet. Go to the APHIS news release page at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom>. Also, anyone with an e-mail address can sign up to receive APHIS press releases automatically. Send an e-mail message to lyris@mdrdlyriss10.aphis.usda.gov and leave the subject blank. In the message, type `subscribe press_releases`.