

# National Animal ID System (NAIS)

The following articles reflect various viewpoints and information about the topic of the National Animal ID System.

## NATIONAL ANIMAL ID SYSTEM IMPLEMENTATION PLAN RELEASED May, 2006

Agriculture Secretary Mike Johanns has announced the release of an implementation plan that outlines timelines and benchmarks for the establishment of the National Animal Identification System (NAIS), along with a plan for the initial integration of private and state animal tracking databases with NAIS.

"Developing an effective animal identification system has been a high priority for USDA and we've made significant strides toward achieving a comprehensive U.S. system," said Johanns. "We recognize that this represents one of the largest systematic changes ever faced by the livestock industry and we have welcomed suggestions from stakeholders to ensure that we continue to gain momentum.

The plan we are releasing today will guide our efforts as we continue to work with our State and industry partners to implement a nationwide system."

For more information, please visit the following website: [www.usda.gov](http://www.usda.gov)

### Dear Fellow Horse Owners:

The National Animal ID system (NAIS), being developed by the US Department of Agriculture and various large market animal groups, is definitely something you need to be aware of. The NAIS started back in 2004 as a voluntary system of national ID of market animals (ie, human food chain livestock). It was touted as the answer to tracking BSE, among other diseases.

It is expanding towards all livestock, including horses. All premises that house animals-private or public-would have to register with much personal owner info and GPS coordinates. Then all animals contained upon these premises would be permanently IDed with a microchip capable of being read at a distance; all at owners' expense.

Although not all of the regulations are set up, it seems to be saying that movement of these livestock would have to be registered every time they leave the premises, no matter for what reason. This would involve reporting said movement by phone and a paper trail. Destination and return would have to be reported. Major fines and possible confiscation of said livestock would be possible for non-compliance.

In my opinion, this whole system shows promise of being a major bureaucratic nightmare with sporadic enforcement. Personally, I am against this ID system as being way too intrusive into the private lives of the citizens, by a government that is way out of control in the way of cost, databases to be corrupted, personal data to be pirated, etc. Even at this voluntary stage (set to be mandatory by Jan. 2009), major data loss to unauthorized parties has been reported from premise registrations. As I understand it, we will need to report every time we saddle up and ride out the driveway, load horses in the trailer to head for a favorite state trail system, trailer to the vet to receive the already required "vet certificates" for out-of-state travel, to the farrier, etc.

The following are websites where more information can be found--both pro and con.

[www.usda.gov/nais](http://www.usda.gov/nais) PRO  
[www.horsecouncil.org](http://www.horsecouncil.org) PRO  
[www.stopanimalid.org](http://www.stopanimalid.org) CON  
<http://nonais> CON  
[www.oneskyranch.com](http://www.oneskyranch.com) CON  
(also contains many links and information)

Horse people have a reputation of not responding to threats to our desired hobby or business until it is too late.

Thank you for taking time to read this and please take time to become informed of the ID system and to stay informed. Publishing of the regulations is scheduled for July 2006; after that date, public input may well be ignored and the entire system railroaded onto the mostly unsuspecting horse owning public.

Remember: scheduled to

become MANDATORY in January of 2009.

*We had best be informed and, no matter how you feel about it, register your comments.*

*Marsha Achenbach  
17073 235th St.  
Keosauqua, IA 52565*

## ESWG Information Booklet on NAIS Available

FROM: The American Horse Council  
[www.americanhorsecouncil.org](http://www.americanhorsecouncil.org)

The Equine Species Working Group (ESWG) has developed an informational booklet titled *NAIS and Horses: the Facts Surrounding the National Animal Identification System as it Applies to the Horse Industry in the U.S.*

This booklet was put together in an effort to answer the many questions and concerns that have been raised from the equine industry on the very important and difficult issue of the potential application of the national ID system to horses. The booklet addresses the following topics: history of the NAIS, why the horse industry should be involved in developing an acceptable NAIS, equine diseases of concern, methods of equine identification, potential benefits, current status of the NAIS, frequently asked questions, and a list of Equine Species Working Group members.

It is important that equine organizations, events, service providers and horse owners know the facts so they can learn about the NAIS, the efforts of the ESWG, and how a national equine identification plan might affect them, should one become mandatory. We encourage industry members to not only become educated on the issue by reading this material, but to also distribute it throughout the industry. The booklet is available to download from the American Horse Council website: [www.horsecouncil.org](http://www.horsecouncil.org).

## The following excerpts provide examples of information to be found in the ESWG Booklet

**Mission, Purpose and Actions of the Equine Species Working Group (ESWG)**  
<http://www.horsecouncil.org/equineid.htm>

*Many in the horse industry are just learning of the national animal identification plan and they are naturally concerned about it. Unfortunately, some of the information that is being circulated about the concept and its potential impact on the horse industry is misunderstood or inaccurate.*

The ESWG has not endorsed the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) or its application to the equine community. A final decision on whether the horse industry should participate in a national ID system must await a definitive proposal from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regarding how the NAIS might apply to the horse industry and individual horse owners. That is still some time away. In addition, no equine organization has taken a formal position specifically supporting the NAIS' application to the equine industry.

Nonetheless, based upon the ESWG's understanding of the development of the NAIS, the System's purpose, and a review of the statements and proposals made by USDA and the federal



legislation calling for a comprehensive national ID system, the ESWG believes that a system in some form will become mandatory in the future and will likely be applied to the equine industry.

It is for this reason that the ESWG was formed. The horse industry determined that it was better to involve itself in crafting the proposed system, rather than simply allowing it to be imposed on the industry. Simply stated, the ESWG was formed to evaluate the NAIS and the potential benefits and costs of the system to the equine industry in order to make reasonable and informed recommendations to USDA regarding how the equine industry might be included in the program should it become mandatory. The ESWG is committed to make recommendations for a system that recognizes the uniqueness of the equine industry and, to the extent possible, minimally affects current practices and procedures.

To accomplish this mission, it is critical that the ESWG receive active input from each member organization and individual horse owners. As broad a group as possible was involved in this process through the ESWG to ensure that disparate views and expert opinions were available. It is also critical that the ESWG hear from the industry at large. In order to receive serious comments and suggestions it is important that the ESWG keep the equine industry informed about the NAIS and the working group's activities so that any recommendations that ultimately come out of the group will be supported by the broadest possible segment of the horse industry.

Finally, it is important that individual horse owners and organizations recognize that they may participate in the process by directly contacting the USDA and state agencies with their opinions, views and suggestions. Since federal and state agencies are involved in initiating the system, the public has a continued right to provide input directly to their federal and state officials.

Is this an easy issue to address? No. As the NAIS is currently presented, are horses likely to be a part of it? Yes. Did the USDA take comments on the NAIS as presented? Yes, and the ESWG has submitted comments. We also put out press releases and members submitted information to industry publications regarding the open comment period.

The ESWG presents this information with the hope that those who own horses in the US will read it, inform themselves of the facts, and become a part of the process. Locate your representative on the Equine Species Working Group and discuss your suggestions, concerns, and ideas regarding this issue, or contact the USDA and your state officials directly.

Respectfully,  
Equine Species Working Group

## *Animal Identification Program*

### *Safeguarding Animal Health*

by Dr. Dave Schmitt, Acting State  
Veterinarian for Iowa

The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) is a national animal health program intended to identify all livestock and equine animals in the United States, tracking their movements from one premises to another. It is being developed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in partnership with state animal health agencies. The program will allow 48-hour trace back and trace forward capabilities of livestock that may have a disease or have been exposed to disease.

The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) consists of three parts: premises identification, animal identification, and tracking of animal movements. The first part of the system, and the one that we are focusing on now, is premises registration. It is important that Iowa's livestock producers have their premises registered to make it possible to trace ailing and exposed livestock to the probable source of infection. The sooner animal health officials identify infected and exposed animals, the sooner they can contain the disease and put a stop to it. Registering livestock premises will help us ensure the health and welfare of Iowa's livestock industry.

Premises registration is voluntary at this point, and done at no cost to the applicant. It deals only with the land itself, and what types of animals reside on that property. Registering premises is an easy process. Producers complete a premises registration form and send it back to the Iowa Department of Agriculture. Once the form is received, the information is entered into a database and a Premises Identification Number is assigned by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA.) An informational letter and identification card is then sent out to the applicant. The card contains the premises information and identification number, which is printed on the card and encoded on both a bar code and magnetic strip.

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) is encouraging all producers and livestock related non-producers to get their premises registered now, and avoid any costs that may be incurred in the future. If you have any questions, please contact Steve White, the State Animal Identification Coordinator, at 888.778.7675. You can also download a premises registration form, and get more information, at: <http://www.agriculture.state.ia.us/premise-ID.htm>

With everyone's help, we will better protect our national herd in case of foreign or domestic animal disease, which could be devastating to our producers, and our economy.

## *Premises Registration*

Excerpted from [www.thehorse.com](http://www.thehorse.com) 3/06 Art # 6667

Premises registration is the foundation for the three-tiered National Animal Identification System (NAIS), which, when fully implemented, is designed to enable animal health officials to trace the movement of diseased or exposed livestock or poultry within 48 hours. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has spearheaded NAIS development since 2004, with the cooperation of national species working group committees.

In Texas, HB 1361, passed and signed into law in 2005, authorized the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) to institute an animal identification program consistent with the NAIS, and to collect fees to offset some costs of agency operations. More than 600 people submitted comments on the proposed premises registration rule during the comment period that ended in February.

"Although the TAHC commissioners recognize the need for an improved animal identification system, they need additional time to consider complaints regarding the \$10 per year fee, concerns about livestock and poultry identification and reporting requirements that, eventually, may be implemented on a national basis; and fears about the potential loss of privacy," said Bob Hillman, DVM, Texas state veterinarian and TAHC executive director.

He explained that premises registration, the only aspect of the NAIS



## *Equine Species Working Group Frequently Asked Questions*

### **Q: What is the NAIS?**

A: The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) is a program intended to identify animals and record their movements for the purpose of disease control. The ultimate goal of this identification system is to create an effective, uniform national animal tracing system that will help maintain the health of U.S. herds and flocks. When fully operational, it will allow animal tracing to be completed within 48 hours of disease detection, ensuring rapid containment of the disease, protecting our country's animals and allowing for continued commerce.

### **Q: Is the ESWG a committee of the American Horse Council?**

A: No. The ESWG is an independent coalition of over 30 National Equine Organizations. The American Horse Council is one of the many members of the ESWG and as such is involved in evaluating the NAIS and developing recommendations on how the horse industry might fit into the program.

### **Q: Why is the ESWG reviewing any plan to include equines in the NAIS?**

A: The ESWG is engaged because if the horse industry does not participate in the evaluation and development, a national system could be forced upon the industry without its input. The purpose of the NAIS is to protect the livestock industry in case there is an outbreak of a potentially catastrophic animal disease or an attack of bio-terrorism. Either scenario could result in a significant loss to the horse industry and seriously limit horse owners' abilities to move or export their horses. There is strong support for NAIS at USDA, in Congress, with the state animal health authorities and within the livestock industry. The ESWG believes that it is in the best interests of the horse industry to work with those instituting NAIS to be sure that our industry's specific concerns are understood and considered in case the plan becomes mandatory.

### **Q: Does the NAIS currently explain how it might apply to horses?**

A: No. There is currently no section explaining how equines might fit within the requirements of the NAIS. The section on horses is blank. Some horse owners are apparently reading the information presently on the USDA website describing the NAIS and its application to cattle and other species and concluding that the requirements apply to the horse industry. That is not the case. The possible application of the NAIS to horses has not been formulated.

### **Q: Is the effort to create an equine identification plan linked in any way to the slaughter of horses for human consumption or meat quality?**

A: NO. The plan is being formulated as a way to identify animals involved in an outbreak of serious infectious or contagious diseases that may spread rapidly among horses, other livestock or humans. The slaughter of horses for human consumption has not been a part of the discussions and the members of the ESWG include associations that support a ban on the slaughter of horses, organizations that oppose a ban on the slaughter of horses for human consumption and organizations that do not have a position on the ban on slaughter of horses for human consumption. The American Horse Council which originally organized the task force is neutral on the bills to ban slaughter of horses. The NAIS is intended to protect animals from disease as well as to identify those that have a disease or may have been exposed to a disease so that they may be treated quickly and minimize the economic impact of the disease outbreak.

### **Q: Since horses are not used for human consumption in the U.S., why should the horse industry be involved in the NAIS?**

A: The NAIS is about the health of our nation's livestock, not just food safety. The horse industry is an integral part of this nation's livestock community and as such has a responsibility to consider a national livestock program that will benefit it as well as other livestock industries. The horse industry benefits from being a part of the livestock industry through tax relief, disease control and research through the USDA and disaster funding.

### **Q: Are there diseases that affect horses that also affect other livestock or humans?**

A: Yes, there are several. Some diseases that affect horses, other livestock and even humans include rabies, salmonella, ringworm, anthrax, screwworm and vesicular stomatitis.

### **Q: Does the NAIS stop disease?**

A: No. The NAIS is not a program that will stop disease, but is a program intended to stop the SPREAD of disease and to allow commerce and movement to continue if a disease outbreak does occur. The sooner animal health officials can identify infected and exposed animals and premises, the sooner they can contain the disease and stop its spread. This will also allow a quicker lifting of any restrictions on movement and commerce.

### **Q: Are there any bio-terrorism concerns involving equine diseases?**

A: Several diseases of horses have long been recognized as capable of being used as a bio-terrorist weapon, such as glanders and Venezuelan Equine Encephalomyelitis. Glanders is a disease of horses, mules and donkeys and has not been found in the U.S. since the early 1900's. Glanders can be spread to humans through horses and was used by the German army in World War I to sicken enemy soldiers. In its bio-weapons program, the former Soviet Union was producing the bacterial agent that causes glanders even as late as the early 1980's. Glanders continues to exist in several third world countries, some of which have recently become members of the European Union. The U.S. requires that all horses imported into the U.S., including those temporarily exported for competition purposes, to be tested negative for glanders before being permitted to enter (or re-enter as the case may be) the domestic population.

### **Q: Will I have to report every time my horse moves off its premises?**

A: Not EVERY single movement of your horse will have to be reported. This would obviously be an unrealistic goal. Movements such as local trail rides, shows or ropings would not be required reportable events. It is likely that the movements that would be reportable would be when horses are transported interstate or to a premises where a brand inspection, Certificate of Veterinary Inspection or other health papers are required.

### **Q: Is the NAIS going to be mandatory in 2008?**

A: There are no regulations being developed at this time for the NAIS to be a nationally mandated program. It is currently proposed that it be implemented on a voluntary basis. The ESWG has recommended that the plan not be applied to the horse industry until 2010. However there are many states, such as Wisconsin with mandatory premises registration, that are developing their own legislation on certain components of the NAIS. It is recommended that you check with your state Department of Agriculture to learn more on how the state is currently implementing the NAIS and what its future plans are for the program's implementation.

### **Q: How do I get more information on the NAIS?**

A: To find out more about the NAIS you can visit the following website: [www.usda.gov/nais](http://www.usda.gov/nais). You can also visit the ESWG website found on: [www.horsecouncil.org](http://www.horsecouncil.org). We also recommend that you contact your state Department of Agriculture to learn more on how your state is progressing with the implementation with the NAIS. Contact information for each state Depts of Agriculture can be found on the NAIS website.



# How Might it Effect Us?

*A personal story*

*by Jauson King, One Sky Ranch, Corning, IA*

NAIS, or the National Animal Identification System, has 13 bills in the house to protect our health and free trade markets. It is to protect us against BSE, bird flu and other unforeseen plagues and catastrophes. At least that is what the American public is formally being told.

I have been asked to tell you a story about failure, about hopelessness and what would have happened to my life and that of my children if NAIS had been in place as a law 15 years ago.

Fifteen years ago, I left my 180-acre ranch for a battered women's shelter. Back then the law didn't allow me any property. I left with the clothes on my back, no money and two small children. I was allowed one week in the shelter. After that week I had to make some hard choices. I found a job in a bar, saved my money and within a short time had enough to buy a very cheap small 30-acre farm in Iowa.

I had spent everything I had on shelter, so I applied for welfare. You can call it public assistance and try to dress it up, but it is a handout any way you look at it, and that's how it felt too. Like I had failed. I was able to trade for four dairy goats. I learned to make soap and cheese, and to do things I never thought I would need or learn to do. My children lived on cheese and crackers, the meat from unwanted buck kids and wild foods. That's all we had. I soon got a few chickens, so we had eggs.

As time went on, I got a horse and started trading horses. I bought unbroken and many times sick animals, fixed them up, trained and re-sold them. Eventually I was off welfare.

In the little town where I lived there were few jobs. I applied everywhere, even to jobs I didn't know if I could do. No one would hire me. It boiled down to: make the ranch work, or starve.

I remember one day my oldest son had blisters on his feet and I ask him why he didn't tell me his shoes were too small. He said, "Mom, we don't have any money." I took a sheep to sale that day and he got a new pair of shoes. At the tender age of nine he was all too aware of how much we relied on and needed those animals to simply eat and survive. He didn't want me to have to sell one, not for him.

As time passed, my boys learned more from working on this ranch than I could have ever taught them on my own. People would comment that I was the exception in single parenting. That most kids from single parents didn't turn out like mine. I have to argue. I have never been a single parent. A *herd* of mothers helped me! I owe the wonderful lives of my children to every one of those women, with more gratitude than I can ever express.

Today I have some of the top Longhorn Cattle in the world. My steers sell consistently for thousands more than any other breeding program in the world. I have started a ground-breaking program called the *International Riding Steer Assn*. My horses also have been shown to the top in their registry and their fields. My oldest son has served his country overseas and thanked me for his childhood, stating that his youth and experiences here on the ranch is why he didn't crumble while those around him did. My youngest is an independent helpful man who not only volunteers in his community, but is a prime example of what we all should be as well. I have also raised three children that were not mine, as well as helping to set up and support many youth programs, and making regular donations to the American Indian College fund.

Now turn back the clock 15 years.

Put NAIS in place. I traded for four goats approximately \$100.00 value, from a friend that wanted to help me. Add \$70.00 per head for the NAIS tags and the premise ID, plus annual taxes and fees. That includes the chickens and the kid's pet rabbit. Add in the mandatory spay and neuter fees and microchipping for the farm dog that kept the coyotes away. Remember I couldn't get a job in this community. I was an outsider, a Native and a single mom. All of which they didn't want living here. So where would I be today? Where would my children be without the freedom to ride their pony all over town after school? Would I have been able to help the kids I have? Would Jamie have been able to set up the Communteers and help the elders in our community? Would Chris have fought for his country? How many lives would he not have saved? (that includes suicide watch) If NAIS had been in place 15 years ago, I would still be on welfare today. How many others have similar stories? One can only guess.

What we in the small farming community do know, is that our lives and the lives of those we effect would be so drastically changed if NAIS were to come into place that it will change completely and forever the face of America. Take away the right to own animals by small growers and ranchers and what will we have left?

When you see a bumper sticker that reads, "Big business hurts small farms," do you really understand the impact of what it says?

NAIS is not about health issues, or world trade; it's about big business and control. In the 13 bills in the house at the time of this writing, every one of them contains wording that gives mandatory surveillance at all times, of all premises and animals, by Global Positioning through electronic microchipping of each animal on a small farm and in large lots (costing only \$1.00-\$3.00 per lot of thousands for mass producers). It gives the USDA the right to destroy your livestock without warrant or hearing.

We are entering a New America. It is up to us to be willing to fight for our freedoms and lifestyles here at home, as hard as we ask our sons and daughters to fight overseas. While our old America fades away, what we will be left with is up to us. We can fight, or we can let go.

I ask you to ask yourself this question. Where would America be if the founding fathers never fought against bad government? We would be an English colony—that's where. We as Minute Men, (and all American citizens are, unless born into a Sovereign nation. (i.e., Native, by right of birth) have the right to bear arms. We have the right to a fair trial. We have the right not to have our property entered without warrant (by state or military). We have the right as Americans, Sovereign or not, to provide for the common defense, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty upon ourselves and our Posterity. We have the right, not given by God, or man, but by our own hand, the right to freedom.

*Please visit my website, where you will find an abundance of information about the NAIS, at*

**[www.oneskyranch.com/NAIS.htm](http://www.oneskyranch.com/NAIS.htm)**

*I have links to all the bills in the house, links to how to contact your state reps, etc. It is updated as I get facts and also gives links to*

*yahoo groups for each state.*

