

**22 DECEMBER 2006**

### **USDA Responds to Industry ID Question**

U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, responded to questions about how the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) will interact with the ID components in the existing National Scrapie Eradication Program (NSEP) and the Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP). The complete content of the communication follows.

"USDA acknowledges that there has been some confusion about the NAIS and how it interacts with existing scrapie eradication programs such as the voluntary Scrapie Flock Certification Program (SFCP) and the NSEP.

"The NAIS is voluntary at the federal level. USDA firmly believes that it is a producer's choice to participate in any aspect of the program and that the NAIS works best when livestock owners/producers freely decide to take part.

"For this reason, at the federal level, enrolling in the SFCP or requesting official tags as part of the NSEP does not register your premises in the NAIS. Conversely, choosing to register your premises in the NAIS does not affect your flock identification number or your status in the SFCP. The three programs compliment each other but are distinct.

"The NAIS is voluntary. SFCP is voluntary. Complying with the identification requirements of the NSEP is required by a regulation that has been in place since August 2001.

"Producers are not required by USDA to participate in the NAIS in order to either enroll in SFCP or to get the official ear tags provided free to producers through the NSEP.

"Some of the NAIS approved ear tags have also been approved for scrapie program use. This allows producers to participate in all three programs using the same ear tag. As with other NAIS tags, premises registration with NAIS is required to purchase these tags.

"Continued grassroots input is critical to the success of the NAIS. Accordingly, USDA and its state and industry partners have established NAIS working groups to provide recommendations and input as we move forward with the system.

"Each species working group membership consists of representatives from various levels and segments of their industry.

"The sheep working group has recommended that sheep producers who decide to participate in the NAIS be allowed to use the identification devices and numbering systems currently used for SFCP and NSEP.

"The recommendation does not mean that producers participating in SFCP and NSEP will be registered in NAIS, only that those who choose to register would have the option to continue to use SFCP and NSEP identification devices."