

Position Paper: Traceability



BACKGROUND

Efforts to coordinate livestock traceability initiatives in Canada began in 1990. In 1998, the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) was created to coordinate the cattle sector's identification and traceability initiatives and was responsible for the introduction of mandatory cattle identification. Although this was a significant step forward, livestock traceability systems must go beyond animal identification to ensure animal and human health are maintained and food safety standards are upheld. Therefore, it is recognized that livestock traceability systems should include the three pillars of: *animal identification*; *premises identification*; and *animal movement reporting*.

Both levels of government believe that a national agriculture and food traceability system would benefit Canada and its producers. Such a system would help the nation respond to challenges such as foreign animal disease, and equally help producers seize opportunities such as improved access to international markets. Additionally, traceability could be leveraged into opportunities for growth which could support the sustainability of the agriculture sector into the future.

ISSUE

The declaration made at the July, 2009 Federal-Provincial-Territorial meeting of Ministers of Agriculture mandated a livestock traceability system for 2011. This remains the projected start date for this program despite the fact that livestock groups are currently at various stages in their efforts to address traceability. The 2011 deadline seems exceedingly aggressive but government has reiterated the necessity of the 2011 implementation.

Efforts to coordinate national and provincial systems have been unsuccessful to date and there is significant variation among provincial programs which often operate independently of our national system. In order to move toward a national traceability system there must be a concerted effort by both levels of government and industry in coordinating this issue. Ultimately the scope of traceability for beef cattle must be further developed and tangibly defined to enhance the competitiveness of the Canadian beef industry.

OCA POSITION

OCA endorses the principles of traceability stemming from the 2006 Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) Semi-Annual meeting.

The 2006 CCA "*Guiding Principles*" include: foremost, that traceability will not impede or delay commerce; that the costs of the system will not result in the industry becoming non-competitive; that the technology must be capable of reading identification at a rate which accommodates normal commerce; that tolerance ranges for readability be acceptable to the industry standards; and that producer information must remain confidential.

In addition to the CCA principles, OCA will promote the position that producers retain rights to access information on a shared basis. OCA endorses producer sharing of value-added information between sectors while maintaining producer confidentiality. Doing so ultimately enhances the value and practicable applications the system provides and simultaneously protects the producer's identity.

i) Animal Identification

Great foresight was shown in launching the CCIA in 1998. Since that time, producers have accepted mandatory animal identification, and have, in fact, spent tens of millions of dollars on this component of the traceability system.

ii) Premises Identification

The definition of home premise must include linked premises which are defined as any land a producer owns rents or leases and may include community pastures. Linked Premises are limited to land where cattle are located.

To help contain future foreign animal disease outbreaks, OCA supports the mandatory annual reporting of premise identification.

Furthermore, OCA strongly supports that wherever possible a producer's premise ID number shall be the number assigned by the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA).

iii) Animal Movement Reporting

OCA supports the concept of traceability, but we expect government to bear the costs for both producers and the industry at-large in the establishment, operation, and maintenance of a movement reporting system, as it is a public good. This will help to ensure the industry is not placed a competitive disadvantage.

Additionally, OCA requests that movement reporting need only be required on movement in, be that at an auction market, cattle show, change in ownership, custom backgrounding/feeding operation, or slaughter.

This position has been articulated to the provincial government and OCA will continue to lobby this position as further discussions with government take place.