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Sec. Vilsack announces National Animal ID listening sessions

By Agri-Pulse Staff

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Under pressure from Congress to move ahead quickly on creating a mandatory National Animal Identification System (NAIS), Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced Monday that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will hold a series of NAIS listening sessions. The meetings will take place next month in Alabama, Colorado, Connecticut, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington state.

"USDA needs to hear directly from our stakeholders as we work together to create an animal disease traceability program we can all support," Vilsack said. "I encourage individuals and organizations to voice their concerns, ideas and potential solutions about animal identification, by either attending these listening sessions or submitting comments online."

APHIS seeks to gather not only producer comments and concerns, but also potential or feasible solutions to create a program producers can feel comfortable supporting. The listening sessions will include information about the current program, as well as providing an opportunity to give public testimony or ask program-related questions. Discussion sessions related to NAIS' cost, impact on small farmers, privacy and confidentiality, liability premises registration, animal identification and animal tracing will allow producers to provide their input on ways to make the program into something they all can support.

The public meetings will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. local time, with registration one hour prior to each meeting. The meetings will be held in the following locations:

Thursday, May 14: Harrisburg, Pa.
Monday, May 18: Pasco, Wash.
Wednesday, May 20: Austin, Texas
Thursday, May 21: Birmingham, Ala.
Friday, May 22: Louisville, Ky.
Wednesday, May 27: Storrs, Conn.
Monday, June 1: Greeley, Colo.

Additional information on the meetings can be found at: www.usda.gov/nais/feedback.

In 2004, APHIS began implementing a voluntary NAIS program, an animal traceability system that would enable producers and animal health officials to respond quickly and effectively to animal disease events in the United States.

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