

National Animal Identification System (NAIS): Part 8: Are you a “Target”?

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About 3 years ago, when I first began looking into the NAIS (then called the “USAIP”, with its “mandatory” implementation by 2006), I got that uneasy feeling that the Federal government was determined to bring all farms and animals under its control – no matter where, no matter how. Was this new “*no matter how*” attitude the “... *government for the people, by the people* ...” Americans are entitled to, or did I miss something?

Notwithstanding the fact that America’s farmers, or ranchers, for many decades had successfully dealt with all kinds of animal diseases, all of a sudden ALL farms and animals were being “targeted” by the NAIS. Is your farm, or ranch, being targeted? Are YOU a “target”? That’s precisely what your government seems to think, and I quote (my emphasis added) from page 2 of Washington state’s cooperative agreement with the USDA (drafted May 25, 2005 and signed July 25, 2005):

“The states are in an excellent position to assist in the implementation of NAIS because they work regularly with the target populations and industry partners. ...”

Provided you have a farm, or ranch, or own (or give care!) to a barnyard animal, YOU ARE A TARGET! What truly surprised me, though, was the next sentence from the above quote (my emphasis added):

*“If WSDA does not do this type of work, **implementation of NAIS will be delayed and resisted.**”*

These two quotes plainly show that the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) expected that implementation of the NAIS will be “delayed and resisted” by the “target populations” unless the state leverages its “excellent position” and assists in the implementation. Because these statements are taken straight from the so-called “Cooperative Agreement” entered into by the state and the Federal government, to me this evidences a troubling situation: on one hand, the state is asking the Federal government (USDA) for a grant of Federal funds, while on the other hand leveraging its credibility with the “populations” targeted by the NAIS.

Even though the above arrangement is perfectly legal according to RCW 16.57.353(2), the fact remains that WSDA did not disclose ANY of the above particulars to the “target populations”, nor the amount of Federal funds awarded to WSDA in return for its promotion of the NAIS in general, and specifically the “Premises Registration” drive currently underway. By comparison, if someone you trust were to entice you into signing up for something you have some concerns with, but omitted to tell you that he would get money for signing you up, would that be “above board”? Personally, I’d have a problem with this.

But your government has farther-reaching plans. In a recent mailing to various livestock associations dated September 28, 2006, WSDA admits being way behind in the registration of premises, and I quote (my emphasis added):

*“Our goal is to register 8,500 premises by December 31, 2006. Currently, we have 1,200 premises registered. This is going to be a quick and intense process, but **with your organization’s assistance, we feel this can be accomplished. We need help from vital members of the livestock community, such as your association, in order to register all of the premises in Washington State.**”*

Just how does WSDA intend to secure this kind of “assistance”? I’ll continue my quote from the same mailing (my emphasis added):

*“The WSDA is offering a **\$10 reimbursement for every premise your association registers**. The reimbursement is a compensation for the cost and effort involved in the registration process. Your association will be reimbursed until our funds are exhausted. **In order to receive compensation** you must follow the guidelines below: 1. Complete and return the Purchase Service Agreement (attached) to the WSDA. 2. Once we receive your Purchase Service Agreement **we will send your association premise registration forms**. Please, **stamp or label the top of every form with your association name or logo**. 3. Distribute the premises registration forms to your members as you see fit. ...”*

Although the above quote speaks of ... “a \$10 reimbursement for every premises your association registers ...”, for all intents and purposes the state is going to pay a REWARD of ten dollars for every signup – no signups, no reimbursements. How do you feel about your association, which I presume has your full and unwavering trust and support, performing as a common contractor for the state, endorsing the state’s request by stamping said forms with your association’s name or logo, bearing the full expense of mailing the state’s registration forms, then accepting a finder’s fee-like reward if and when a registration happens? Is this arrangement what you had intended when you founded, or joined, your association or club?

Moreover, are your association’s officials sufficiently informed and impartial enough to provide you with ALL the “essential facts” about the NAIS, the very facts the state has failed to mention thus far including the amount of Federal funds the state has received, and the source of the funds used for this so-called “reimbursement” project? Last but not least, here’s one final quote (my emphasis added) of the closing question taken straight from the state’s “Purchase Service Agreement”:

*“How Many Premises Do You Plan to **Target?**”*

So you see, not only are you a TARGET for the state, but by seeking to enlist and thereby deputizing livestock associations on the state’s behalf, you’ve also become a TARGET for your association (asking for your voluntary participation in the NAIS). Since WSDA will provide every enrolled association with a registration roster by the end of the project (Dec. 31, 2006), it is easy to glean the project’s game plan: first the initial endorsement of the NAIS by the association’s Board of Directors (after all, they do have to approve and sign the state’s “Purchase Service Agreement”, then stamp and/or logo the state’s forms to be sent out), followed by peer pressure (to sign up) brought down on members, and lastly risking potential embarrassment for not having signed up.

Where does this leave you? If you’re serving in some official capacity, you owe it to yourself to become fully informed BEFORE acting upon the state’s proposition. If you are a member of a livestock association (incorporated or not), club, breed registry, show association etc. that contemplates accepting the state’s proposition, I strongly suggest that you insist on FULL disclosure of all “essential facts”, pro’s and con’s, BEFORE registering your premises with the NAIS. Who can you trust to get that kind of unbiased information? At a minimum, obtain or review Parts 1-7 of this series of essays. Better yet, get a copy of my book and pose those pesky 12 questions your public officials (state and Federal) have yet to answer about the NAIS.



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