

National Animal Identification System (NAIS): Part 9: Nothing Is What It Seems

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We are all too familiar with the fact that “there is no free lunch” – in the end, someone has to pick up the tab. Likewise, when it comes to the NAIS, who do you think will pick up the tab? Government? Meat processors? Grocery stores? Not likely. Because “we the consumers” ultimately will have to pay for the NAIS, we have a duty to take a hard look NOW at what the NAIS promises for the future. I am quoting directly from the introduction to the “NAIS Draft Program Standards”, page 1 (emphasis added):

“Healthy and protected agriculture promotes human health; provides wholesome, reliable, and secure food resources; mitigates national economic threats; and enhances a sustainable environment. An efficient and effective animal identification program is essential to achieving this goal. ...”

Since we all want “healthy agriculture”, “human health”, “wholesome food” etc., all this sounds ok. However, what is actually being said? Let us take another look at this quote, slightly rearranged, to see what is actually being promised:

“An efficient and effective animal identification program is essential to achieving [a] healthy and protected agriculture [that]:

- *promotes human health;*
- *provides wholesome, reliable, and secure food resources;*
- *mitigates national economic threats;*
- *and enhances a sustainable environment.”*

However, a review of the NAIS’ four official documents (“Draft Program Standards”, “Draft Strategic Plan”, “Technical Supplement”, “Strategies for the Implementation”) turns up NOTHING to actually “achieve” any of the above goals! Nothing is mentioned about a “sustainable environment”; “mitigates national economic threats”; “wholesome, reliable, and secure food resources”; “promotes human health”; or about “healthy and protected agriculture” – ANYWHERE!

Moreover, no backup information of any kind (scientific, statistical, or epidemiological) is being offered, or referenced, that would lend credibility to the claim that NAIS would be “achieving this goal” of a “healthy and protected agriculture”. But that’s not where the confusion ends, there’s more to consider. Here is an additional quote from the same introduction to the “NAIS Draft Program Standards”, page 1 (emphasis added):

“Another major purpose of the NAIS is to enable State and Federal animal health officials to promptly ascertain animal health status for the purpose of issuing both intrastate and interstate animal health movement certificates.”

Is this a credible claim? According to the NAIS’ four official documents, there is not a single item of animal health-related information ANYWHERE within the NAIS even though the NAIS, along with its cost, is being justified for “disease control and eradication”. Would you want to have your animals’ “health status” be subjected to an animal health official’s “initial presumptive positive diagnosis” based on a system that does not concern itself with the animals’ health at all? Meanwhile, an entire industry of “stakeholders” (i.e. tag distributors and resellers) is being put in place with no guarantees that the NAIS will ever perform to specifications (i.e. its much-touted 48 hour trace-back capabilities). By the USDA’s own admission, the cost of the NAIS to the individual producer, or the livestock industry at large, is still

unknown. In the meantime, the producers (at least for now) must absorb the cost of participating, and by virtue of the above animal “movement certificates”, may collaterally be forced into participating.

While the NAIS touts “identification” on one hand, it requires “registration” of property (land, farms, and animals) first and foremost. Notwithstanding these collateral issues, no guarantees of ANY kind are being given to anybody by our government (Federal, State or Tribe) despite the fact that the NAIS disclaims any liability for security or privacy breaches, and the NAIS will not assure accuracy, completeness and confidentiality even though it “owns” the information. Without such guarantees, how can you ever be sure that the NAIS will indeed make good on the above promises to the American consumers, farmers, ranchers, or animal health officials, respectively?

Given these inconsistencies and uncertainties, who stands to benefit from this arrangement? Perhaps the following quote (emphasis added) from the United States Code, Title 31, Section 6305, regarding Federal/State “Cooperative Agreements” (such as NAIS’ implementation), will shed some light on this:

“(1) the principal purpose of the relationship is to transfer a thing of value to the State, local government, or other recipient to carry out a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by a law of the United States instead of acquiring (by purchase, lease, or barter) property or services for the direct benefit or use of the United States Government; ...”

For those readers that are joining us now, here’s a brief summary of the essays that have appeared thus far in this series:

Part 1: Is there more than meets the eye?

An overview of the NAIS, the “Federal Registration of Farm Land, Farm Property and Farm Operations” located in places where the Federal government does not have jurisdiction

Part 2: U.S. Premises Identification – Farmers & Ranchers Beware!

A thorough discussion of the system’s “Premises Registration” process, its role and collateral dangers to farmers and ranchers.

Part 3: U.S. Animal Identification = Animal Registration with U.S.

A thorough discussion of the system’s “Animal Identification” process, its role and effect on your animals and their movement.

Part 4: Welcome to USDA’s “National Animal Health Surveillance System”

Per the government’s own documents, the NAIS is merely the precursor to and pretext for establishing a Federal surveillance system that will operate around the clock, day in day out.

Part 5: The Power of “Cooperative Agreements”

The NAIS is coming to your farm, or ranch, by virtue of a contract entered into between the Federal and your State’s government. If you join the NAIS, will you be a party to that contract?

Part 6: “Voluntary Participation” vs. “Show Me The Law”

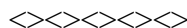
A thorough discussion of what you are volunteering for when joining the NAIS.

Part 7: Do you really have a choice?

The real story behind the kind of choices you have and the facts you need to make an informed decision.

Part 8: Are you a “Target”?

While the Federal government provides the NAIS, your State (or Tribe) will seek to entice you into participating by targeting you, or by contracting with your livestock association.



Bruno Schmidt is co-author of the self-published “Farmer’s Field Guide to the NAIS”. He has spent in excess of 1000 hours over the past three years researching the National Animal Identification System. For more information and latest updates, please visit www.FarmersFieldGuide.com