

Advancing Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) Road Map for Puerto Rico

A Three-Year Plan

Submitted by:

RAMÓN GONZÁLEZ BEIRÓ

SECRETARY

**PUERTO RICO DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
P.O. BOX 10163, SANTURCE, P.R. 00908-1163
787-721-2120**

Submitted to:

**FRED V. SOLTERO, DVM
AREA VETERINARIAN FOR PUERTO RICO
VETERINARY SERVICES
ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**654 MUNOZ RIVERA AVE., PLAZA BLDG. SUITE 700, HATO REY, P.R. 00918
787-766-6050**

Date: January 26, 2023

Table of Contents

I.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
II.	CURRENT TRACEABILITY SITUATION	4
2.1	<i>Who are we?</i>	4
2.2	<i>Where are we now?</i>	4
2.3	<i>Strengths and Weaknesses</i>	5
2.4	<i>Opportunities and Threats</i>	6
2.5	<i>Inventory of existing infrastructure and suitability assessment</i>	6
III.	VISION AND MISSION CONTEXT FOR ADVANCING TRACEABILITY	6
3.1	<i>Vision Statement</i>	6
3.2	<i>Mission Statement</i>	6
IV.	TRACEABILITY REQUIREMENTS	7
4.1	<i>Strategic goal(s)</i>	7
4.2	<i>Programmatic goals (objectives)</i>	7
4.3	<i>ADT Trace Performance Measures (TPMs)</i>	7
4.4	<i>Data requirements</i>	8
4.5	<i>Information technology plan</i>	8
4.6	<i>Resource requirements</i>	9
4.7	<i>Organizational needs</i>	9
4.7.1	<i>Executive support</i>	9
4.7.2	<i>Coordination and oversight procedures</i>	9
4.7.3	<i>Policy</i>	10
4.7.4	<i>Staffing</i>	10
4.7.5	<i>Budget requirements</i>	10
4.7.6	<i>Outreach (required to be addressed within the Road Map)</i>	10
4.8	<i>Monitoring and reporting interstate movement activity</i>	13
V.	ADVANCING TRACEABILITY	13
5.1	<i>Ranking of priorities for advancement</i>	13
5.2	<i>Implementation of objectives</i>	14

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of Agriculture Puerto Rico (PRDA), whose mission is to keep free of economically important diseases, communicable, contagious and / or zoonotic animal populations. The PRDA is developing a written Animal Disease Traceability Road Map in accordance with guidelines provided by USDA-APHIS-VS.

For PRDA, an Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) Road Map and the adoption of an effective response system is critical to the success of disease control activities and must be in place in the event of a disease outbreak. Since Puerto Rico could easily be maintaining as a “close herd” to FAD, prevention measures shall be our priority.

A rapid response minimizes the potential spread of contagious diseases and reduces the detrimental effects of diseases events. The PRDA emergency response capabilities can be improved through standardization of the collectable data needed for animal disease control programs, as increase the animal registration and premises.

A benefit of the ADT is that enables PRDA and APHIS-VS to monitor the movement of animals on the island. By identifying all animals arriving from other states, it's possible to maintain a database in case an emergency, allowing us to locate them and determine the source of infection immediately. The potential emergence of highly contagious diseases makes the need even more urgent. To be better able to prevent disease from spreading and to eradicate disease where it exists, we must be able to quickly trace infected and exposed animals.

A rapid traceback data is required to maintain an effective disease containment, PRDA considers this traceback data in 48 hours, where PRDA and APHIS-VS must have the data required to trace affected animals. Using the common data standard such as Core One System, that provides information related to Premises Registration, and Animal Identification.

PRDA has as an objective, to increase the number of animals identified at their birth premises, Since the best organized livestock sector in Puerto Rico is the milk industry, and all their replacement animals are imported from other states, our efforts should be implementing the animal identification on the dairy industry first.

PRDA will promote the standardization of animal identification in government and industry programs to enhance the traceability, using electronic Id Tags (840 AIN tags). Government programs such as “Control tick-BM86 vaccine”

The standardization data base is necessary for PRDA and APHIS-VS in Puerto Rico to ensure compatibility information. PRDA will be promote use the Interstate Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (ICVI) with the accredited veterinarian to enhance animal disease tracing and rapid emergency response.

II. CURRENT TRACEABILITY SITUATION

2.1 Who are we?

The Department of Agriculture of Puerto Rico (PRDA) is the governmental agency whose mission is to promote, educate, participate in preventing entry of any disease affecting animal health. In conjunction with the District Office of USDA-VS will make efforts to implement the necessary mechanisms to achieve these objectives.

To achieve these objectives, PRDA maintains regular communication with APHIS-VS and inform the dairy, pig/hogs, beef, small ruminant's producers, etc. of the benefits of identifying their premises in the ADT program and their animals with electronic ID-Tags.

2.2 Where are we now?

In Puerto Rico's dairy industries, there are a large range of management practices among the producers. Including those that are every reluctant to adopt the Electronic-ID and recordkeeping requirements as the ADT program request. Some producers utilize individual animal identification for improved management capabilities while others use it as a source of verification. Other producers manage their animals without any official identification.

PRDA continue efforts to protect Puerto Rico agriculture as changes and challenges are addressed to prevent the entry of economically important diseases, communicable, prevention and foreign animal diseases to the animal population.

Currently, tracing in Puerto Rico is accomplished by a combination of hand search and utilization of databases such as Core One and EMRS2 programs. Traces initiated based on an official identification such as back tag or official ear tags are frequently requested for diseases surveillance.

Traces that identify only the premise of origin/destination, number of animals that arrived. Herd records (when available) are a key factor in the success of these traces. Lack of herd records often requires broader investigations.

In Puerto Rico, we are fortunate to have a close working relationship with the veterinarians involved in the food animal industries and can contact them for additional specifics requiring inquiries based on a particular shipment.

Fortunately, the Puerto Rico geographical position helps to control the entry of animals. There are two seaports and two airports allowing Puerto Rico the ability to receive animals (cattle, pigs, and horses) via sea and air.

PRDA maintains control over entry of animals that are introduced to Puerto Rico. They meet a series of requisites to arrive. Requirement includes an import permit that comply with the requisites established by PRDA for each animal species.

Requires a certificate of veterinary health inspection for any animal to reach Puerto Rico once is approved membership, staff of the PRDA will be notified of the arrival of these animals which will be subjected to a visual inspection at ports of arrival. Paper copies of CVI's submitted by issuing veterinarian are filed in the state office. These files can be searched, by hand, chronologically by species and by destination or state of origin.

PRDA are notified of the need to trace animals for a variety of reasons. Most commonly the tracing of animals is related to a disease situation (possible exposure or potential infected animal). Notification is received by email, fax, and phone calls. This notification can originate from the USDA/APHIS/VS District Office and be various types. The following bullets describe how these traces are carried out based on the initial information provided.

Notification = Official ear tag (xxxxx##### or xxxx#####)

- Official ear tags are distributed by USDA to specific venues such as accredited veterinarians.
- Official ear tags are applied as part of program activities.

Notification = Premises of issue

- We contact premises and hope for owner records to aid in search.

2.3 Strengths and Weaknesses

Strengths:

- PRDA Import and Export area, Field Staff.
- PRDA Veterinary Diagnostic Lab.
- Puerto Rico Emergency Management System (ESF 11 Level).
- Open and Productive Dialogue with Industry.
- Outreach Strategies and Effective Communication.
- Traceability included as an integral component of animal disease control.

- PRDA will be receive approximately 3500 electronic official ID, provide by USDA/APHIS/VS, which will be used for identification of Replacement heifers born in Puerto Rico

Weaknesses:

- Fewer personnel for data management.
- Labor intensive, tracking system.
- Reduction of state and federal budgets.
- The acceptance of animal identification program by producers.

2.4 Opportunities and Threats

Part of the challenge and the constant threat of foreign diseases are due to the proximity of countries with, Classical Swine Fever (CSF), African Swine Fever (ASF), Bovine Brucellosis, the migratory movement of birds, portable Avian Influenza (AI) or illegal movement of people, which increases progressively to the extent that our borders are not protected properly.

2.5 Inventory of existing infrastructure and suitability assessment

The PRDA has the capability to implement animal disease traceability as part of an overarching plan to protect the consumers and producers of livestock from devastation caused by animal diseases. Access to USDA resources remains a critical factor in the eventual success of such programs.

III. VISION AND MISSION CONTEXT FOR ADVANCING TRACEABILITY

3.1 Vision Statement

The vision of the PRDA is to enforce state animal health regulations to prevent, control, and eradicate infectious or communicable diseases of livestock and domestic animals. The PRDA also works to protect the state from animal pests and diseases that threaten economic and public health.

3.2 Mission Statement

The mission of the PRDA is to safeguard the animal health, enforce the animal health regulations to prevent, control, and eradicate infectious or communicable diseases of livestock and domestic animals and respond to Emergency Support Function (ESF-11) emergencies related to man-made and/or natural disasters affecting animals.

IV. TRACEABILITY REQUIREMENTS

These goals and objectives are intended to be progressive for the coming years and are not specific to any single year.

4.1 Strategic goal(s)

To develop and implement a state-wide infrastructure for advancing animal disease traceability compatible with States, and USDA standards. The purpose of PRDA is the development in conjunction with USDA-VS of a comprehensive system of animal disease traceability.

4.2 Programmatic goals (objectives)

- Improve animal movement data entry into Core One and EMRS2 programs.
- Improve retrieval capabilities of available traceability information.
- Establish compatible standards for sharing data with States/Tribes/Territories and USDA when needed.
- Integrate surveillance and traceability data.
- Develop state policy pertaining to traceability.
- Target, develop, and implement outreach messaging regarding data quality and processing for animal health information forms.

4.3 ADT Trace Performance Measures (TPMs)

Traceability Performance Standards:

1. Notify States where reference animals were officially identified.
2. Identify traceability unit in which reference animals were identified.
3. Notify State from where reference animals were shipped.
4. Identify traceability unit from which reference animals were shipped.

Performance Measures:

- Time required reporting to the State of official tagging/identifying of an animal in question that has moved interstate.
- Time required for the State of first officially tagging/identifying of an animal in question that has moved interstate to provide record of the official tag distribution.
- Time required reporting to the State from which the animal has moved interstate.

- Time required for the State from which the animal has moved interstate to provide the location and contact information from which the animal was moved interstate.

4.4 Data requirements

Animal disease traceability data is acquired through various programs. Storage, retrieval, and utilization will continue to be by a multi-faceted approach. Efforts will continue to make data searchable in the most efficient possible manner. Electronic means are being merged with paper-based systems. Valuable traceability data are currently collected and provided via paper formats, and these are sorted and filed by date, species, and destination. This system will be integrated into any developing animal disease traceability information system. The shortage of human resources restricts progress of data management.

Standards used for location identification will mirror USDA guidelines. Standards used for official animal identification will duplicate federal standards as prescribed by Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). CFR will define any official identification methods/devices accepted in Puerto Rico. PRDA will expand the utilization of official ear tags beyond the current system on a voluntary basis with producers and practitioners. Tag distribution will be a collaborative effort. VS Memo 578.12 will serve as a guideline for Electronic ID ear tag distribution. The data collection and entering of the tags is being done by USDA-VS and PRDA. The state does not have an official form to collect the data. The Electronic ID ear tag utilization and estimated annual volume of tags are dependent on adoption of federal requirements for official identification.

Record keeping is a core component to Electronic ID ear tag and all official tag systems. Tags will be assigned to an official premises/premises owner. The veterinarian or livestock owner applying the tags will be responsible for timely submission of accurate and complete records. PRDA recognizes the need for and support all efforts to move towards more efficient storage and retrieval of animal disease traceability information. Data will be shared with other States, Territories, and USDA through USDA programs. Current protocol will extend to traceability programs. Data requirements for commuter herd agreements will be species specific.

4.5 Information technology plan

PRDA recognizes the need for and support all efforts to move towards more efficient storage and retrieval of animal disease traceability

information. Current efforts include adoption of a process to include electronic search capabilities with paper storage of Official Certification of Veterinary Inspection.

4.6 Resource requirements

Current PRDA staff has specific expertise to implement traceability. PRDA need additional data management staff to record, process, and track large volumes of animal movement data.

Automated data capture equipment available is on limited supply currently. Additional equipment will help to facilitate further adoption by veterinary practitioners and producers. PRDA have 3 MIM's Units and 2 stick readers, PRDA need other two (2) stick units and one (1) laptop to submit data.

4.7 Organizational needs

4.7.1 Executive support

Department of Agriculture and Veterinary Services are fully supportive of the development of an animal disease traceability system.

4.7.2 Coordination and oversight procedures

Internal program oversight is under the direction of Puerto Rico State Veterinarian and the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture Secretary.

A description of the Puerto Rico Animal Disease Traceability Working Group:

The Puerto Rico Animal Disease Traceability Working Group may be assigned a sub-committee of the Puerto Rico Animal Industry Technical Council (PR-AITC). The PR-AITC is an official advisory board created under, Puerto Rico Statutes to advise and make recommendations to the Department of Agriculture on issues concerning the protection of the animal and livestock interests of Puerto Rico. The Traceability Working Group includes a producer, veterinary practitioners, livestock market owners, Dairy Industry "Asociación de Agricultores", etc.

This group meets in person approximately two times each year. Additional meetings can be held as necessary to respond to program announcements. Information is shared via written correspondence and conference calls are scheduled as needed. Meetings of this PR-AITC sub-committee are open to all interested parties in addition to the committee members.

Additional feedback is gained through working with all industry groups and stakeholders to implement traceability.

4.7.3 Policy

The information which is required to register any premises is basic and not normally considered proprietary.

Individual animal identification and destination data would be considered proprietary in most cases. To protect producer privacy, the Puerto Rico Department of Agriculture and Veterinary Services, does not plan to become a manager of individual animal identification numbers or trade information.

4.7.4 Staffing

Existing PRDA-VS staff is currently utilized for implementing animal disease traceability. Traceability is included as part of many activities of the PRDA-VS. In addition, key staff members are identified as traceability program managers. Additional staff would be needed to increase the scale of operations to include more data management and an increase in services provided.

4.7.5 Budget requirements

Annual budgets can be established only after a program is further defined. Since 2014, PRDA-VS have spent an average of \$13,911 annually on animal disease traceability with 100% of this coming from Federal Cooperative Agreement funding.

4.7.6 Outreach (required to be addressed within the Road Map)

The PRDA-VS outreach plan includes livestock producers, swine feeder producers, poultry producers, dairy cattle producers, small ruminants, and individuals from all industry sectors.

Outreach will be needed to explain USDA plans for rule implementation and state actions to help producers meet traceability requirements.

Efforts will focus on outreach to make producers aware of the major initiative to enhance traceability. Emphasis will be placed on continuing to maintain a premises registration on Core One and EMRS2 programs.

Additional emphasis will be placed on planning to enable livestock producers and the state to meet traceability requirements for implementation of federal regulations. State personnel will explain the shift to the need for development of a plan to enhance traceability and potentially respond to new regulations that are enacted.

Specific outreach will continue serving the Dairy Industry sector. Outreach to and through USDA Accredited Veterinarians will foster understanding of traceability by veterinarians and equip them with animal identification resources for their customers.

Information will need to be provided to producers on identification methods that will meet the requirements for official ID. Tags will have to be provided that have been manufactured and recorded through an approved AIN manufacturer to ensure data capture of correlated producer premises identification number and assigned tag numbers.

A system will be implemented to assign and distribute USDA Official electronic ID tags directly to producers. Records of tags distribution and utilization will be captured through data entry with costs covered by cooperative agreement to the extent possible.

General outreach will continue to the extent possible with allowances for reductions in state (PRDA) budgets and Federal Cooperative Agreement budgets. Priorities will include maintenance of premises identification infrastructure, premises renewals and providing timely and accurate information to all stakeholders.

Outreach will include initiatives to encourage producers who have previously registered their premises to update their premises records as needed. PRDA will continue to engage producers and industry stakeholders to seek feedback for improving traceability.

4.7.6.1 *Accredited veterinarians*

The Puerto Rico Traceability Coordinating Group could include accredited veterinarians. We are fortunate to have a close working relationship with the veterinarians involved in the food animal industries of Puerto Rico.

Outreach to accredited veterinarians is ongoing. PRDA Animal Industry staff maintains the ability to contact all food animal practitioners through working with the industry to facilitate these conferences. Traceability information is routinely shared as part of this conference program.

Official Premises identification provided by PRDA can be made available to producers through their veterinarians. The USDA plan for electronic ID tag distribution includes veterinarians.

4.7.6.2 *Slaughter plants*

Puerto Rico has five private slaughter plants, located around the island. These plants process cattle, swine, goats, and sheep, all under inspection by FSIS.

Notification = Back tag number for residue concerns or slaughter surveillance suspects (##XX-#### format)

- A slaughter date will be included in the trace request.
- Back tag indicates the Livestock Dealer who presented the animal for slaughter by the two-letter code.
 - We have access to these records as needed.
 - Based on the report we can identify the name of the consignor of the animal to the market.
- We contact the consignor of the back tag in question and confirm that they did sell one or more animals on said date and we gather all pertinent information regarding the

specific animal in question and the herd in general.

4.7.6.3 *Industry as a whole*

General outreach will continue to the extent possible through media and participation in producer meetings. The PRDA staff is involved with all types of producer groups from various food animal, equine, and poultry species.

The University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus, “Colegio de Ciencias Agricolas” (UPR-RUM, CCA) is a major outreach partner in that information can be shared through their Cooperative Extension offices in every county.

4.8 Monitoring and reporting interstate movement activity

The PRDA monthly and annual reports show:

- Number of Import Permit Numbers assigned for Veterinary Inspection and other interstate movement documents for movement into Puerto Rico.
- Number of Interstate Certificates of Veterinary Inspection and other interstate movement documents for movement out of Puerto Rico.
- Numbers of animals by species and class for all interstate movements.

V. **ADVANCING TRACEABILITY**

5.1 Ranking of priorities for advancement

- Maintain Current Animal Disease Traceability Infrastructure
- Further Refine Tracing Capabilities and Procedures
- Continue Premises Identification and Registration
- Continue Industry Outreach and Involvement Through All Possible Means
- Enhance Current Traceability Capability
- Optimize the Acquisition and Search Capability of Animal Disease Traceability Data
- Increase the utilization of official identification in Puerto Rico livestock.

- Prepare livestock producers, markets, and shippers to meet future interstate movement requirements and to better insure traceability.

5.2 Implementation of objectives

Objective 1 – Maintain Current Animal Disease Traceability Infrastructure.

Three core components of Puerto Rico’s Traceability program are identified.

Premises-Registration:

- Continue Premises Registration
- Maintain and Update SPRS Data
- Register additional premises through all means available.

Increase Search capability for existing records:

- Continue to maintain high priority for filing paper records.
- Develop system(s) to make paper files searchable electronically.
- Encourage utilization of electronic data collection and storage.

Increase Individual Animal Identification in Puerto Rico:

- Make Electronic ID tags available to all interested participants.
- Ensure that records are maintained for all tags distributed.
- Network with owners of captured individual animal movement data.

Objective 2 – Enhance Current Traceability Capability

PRDA has documented effective response in foreign and program animal disease traceability. Examples of recent challenges include Bovine TB and BRT in a large dairy herd. Time required for response to traces depends on level of priority for each case. PRDA has proven its ability to respond rapidly when circumstances warrant. Efforts are more focused on completeness and attention to detail, than on speed.

Efforts are being made to establish baseline data on livestock transported into and out of state to characterize numbers of shipments, number of animals, use of CVI, and type of identification. This basic information is needed to address planning for establishing a mandatory requirement for animal identification and documentation of the state’s level of traceability. This information is needed to plan for tag acquisition and distribution after official identification is required to move animals interstate.

Under cooperative agreements, PRDA will work with the USDA Area Office to establish a distribution methodology and record capture system for official Electronic ID tags.

Participation by producers can be expected to increase significantly if identification for interstate movement is required. Distribution of these tags at no cost to the producer will require additional resources for tag distribution and recordkeeping.

Tracing will be initially from point of origin and point of premises, to slaughter, and then later each animal movement by recording and capturing animal and premises data.

Objective 3 –Optimize the Acquisition and Search Capability of Animal Disease Traceability Data.

The PRDA will initiate efforts to enhance electronic accessibility of traceability data associated with program disease work. PRDA will support standardized traceability data entry of animal movement data into electronically searchable format. PRDA hopes to work with USDA to develop an automated system which specifically addresses animal disease traceability.

Objective 4 –Implement an Outreach Plan to include accredited Veterinarians, Livestock Producers, and producers of all sectors.

Outreach will be needed to explain USDA plans for rule implementation and state actions to help producers meet traceability requirements.

Efforts will focus on outreach to make producers aware of the major initiative to enhance traceability. Emphasis will be placed on continuing to maintain a premises registration database. Additional emphasis will be placed on planning to enable livestock producers and the state to meet traceability requirements for implementation of a federal regulation. State personnel will explain the shift to a state-tribal based system and the need for development of a plan to enhance traceability and potentially respond to new regulations that are enacted.

Specific outreach will continue to private veterinarians serving the cattle sector. Outreach to and through USDA Accredited Veterinarians will foster understanding of traceability by veterinarians and equip them to be animal identification resources for their customers. Program managers will be involved in training practitioners and their technicians in utilization of the VSPS.

General outreach will continue to the extent possible with allowances for reductions in state (PRDA) budgets and Federal Cooperative Agreement budgets. Priorities will include maintenance of premises identification infrastructure, premises renewals and providing timely and accurate information to all stakeholders.

Outreach will include initiatives to encourage producers who have previously registered their premises to update their premises records as needed. PRDA will continue to engage producers and industry stakeholders to seek feedback for improving traceability.