

# Advancing Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) Road Map for Arkansas

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**A Three-Year Plan**

**Submitted by:**

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#1 NATURAL RESOURCES DRIVE

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Animal Agriculture is the leading component of Arkansas' economy. The key function of the Animal Health Division (AHD) is to prevent disease introduction and be prepared to respond to disease challenges when it occurs. Animal identification is pivotal in disease detection, control, and eradication. Those data points allow rapid traceability that can protect economies and allow rapid recovery. To respond quickly, animal health officials need to know which animals are involved, where they are located, and what other animals might have been exposed. The sooner reliable data is available, impacted animals can be located, appropriate response measures can be taken, and disease spread can be halted.

Historically, AHD data has been spread across several platforms with incumbered search capabilities. Progress has been by changing databases and acquiring management software that will serve as a centralizing platform. The largest success was moving our livestock market data from a front-line Excel form into a web-based searchable form. That format is compatible with "up-stream" state and federal data warehouses.

The ability to find infected and exposed livestock in a rapid manner will:

- Increase our state's disease response capabilities;
- Limit the spread of animal diseases;
- Minimize animal losses and economic impact on the agriculture industry;
- Protect producers' livelihoods;
- Provide sustained market access and confidence for our trading partners;
- Protect or reduce public exposure to zoonotic diseases; and
- Improve animal welfare by reducing morbidity and mortality events.

Our goal is to support USDA's interstate traceability program objectives that promote the use of an official, electronic identification standard that interfaces with specific disease eradication programs, interstate commerce, breed registries, or age and source verification programs. Moving toward integrated electronic reporting and messaging gains efficiencies in our ability to trace animals, reduce transcription errors and speed commerce.

Critical elements of this effort include Traceability Performance Measures (TPM), distribution and administration of National Uniform Eartag System (NUES) tags, Radio Frequency Identification Devices (RFID) and other official identification (ID) devices, data sharing, outreach, monitoring and reporting of interstate movement activity, and traceability implementation priorities. Successful implementation of this plan should result in a rapid response to program diseases, facilitate continuity of business for affected commodities, Arkansas and other state's producers in the event of a disease outbreak, and enhanced compliance with federal and state ADT rules. AHD yearly goals are stated in Section 4.2 below.

## II. CURRENT TRACEABILITY SITUATION

### 2.1 Who are we?

This roadmap is prepared and is to be implemented by AHD, the animal disease control and animal emergency response agency for Arkansas. Traceability data is often used for disease traces, lost or stolen animal inquiries and other investigations as needed. AHD personnel critical to the success of ADT include the Director, the State Veterinarian, the Field Services Veterinarian, NPIP Administrator, the ADT Program Coordinator, and the ADT Assistant Program Coordinator. AHD is governed by a Board of Animal Health that consists of nine public members appointed by the Governor that advise agency personnel. AHD maintains an Animal Disease Traceability staff composed of the following members:

Andrew Fidler, DVM	State Veterinarian
vacant	AR Field Services Veterinarian
Blake Walters	AR ADT Program Coordinator
Cindy Taylor	AR ADT Assistant Coordinator
Patrick Fisk	Director, ADA-AHD
Kevin Simmons	NPIP Coordinator - Arkansas ADA-ALPD

## 2.2 Where are we now?

Animal disease traceability is a critical component of the overall animal health program. Livestock Inspectors employed by AHD place and record USDA official ID a at livestock markets to facilitate compliance with the USDA ADT rule. The data is captured via a web-based form and is stored on the AHD server. All inspectors have laptops and RFID readers. This electronic integration along with continuing to offer and encourage on-farm Brucellosis vaccination has facilitated identification of many breeding cattle likely to remain in the state. The livestock inspectors' current focus is on electronic identification placement in replacement stock presented at all Arkansas livestock markets.

AHD strives to continue enhancing our capabilities to electronically record and transmit ADT data in the field. Devices have been updated as needed and data generated is being formatted to uploading into CoreOne/SCS. A cloud based form has been created with an Excel format compatible with CoreOne/SCS. We continue to enhance the electronic and mobile-friendly aspects of traceability tasks while working to maintain compatibility with other state and commercial electronic systems.

Two dedicated administrative staff members can complete national performance traces. One of them is available 24-7 in the event of a true emergency response. They practice completing the traces without calling associated states that probably will not be available after hours. They open the task, research appropriate databases and upload answers well within the national goal. Our staff strives for accuracy and efficiency.

## 2.3 Strengths and Weaknesses

The primary strength for ADT is approximately 20 AHD field livestock inspectors (LSI). LSIs are at livestock markets on sale days identifying animals and recording established identification devices. An added attribute is the working relationship between USDA APHIS VS and AHD field personnel and administrative cooperation. The Arkansas Survey Herd program (swine registration) and NPIP Live Bird Market Surveillance (LBMS) provide a framework for monitoring those animal populations at risk.

Recently added IT personnel have engaged our division and developed an online form based on needs. They are working on API functions to communicate with the platform. The Livestock Market component was launched March 2023. Work continues to establish cross training, reliability and timeliness of electronic capture and transmission of ADT data. Further development of compatible IT applications and equipment will enhance efficient data entry and foster ADT transparency and fuller access. Of critical importance is ensuring ongoing compatibility with other state, federal, and commercial traceability systems, and continued efforts from IT personnel have this aim.

## 2.4 Opportunities and Threats

Cow-calf beef and poultry production are leading animal agriculture commodities in Arkansas. Arkansas ranks in the Top 20 for cattle production and in the Top Five in most categories of poultry production (per NASS statistics). Approximately 1 million feeder pigs are produced annually. Our feral hog population is a constant concern. An animal disease event in these groups could have a significant impact on the state's economy. AHD is tasked as the lead agency in responding and mitigating impact of animal diseases and natural disasters that would affect animal agriculture. An efficient ADT program is essential to timely response and a critical element in fulfilling this responsibility. Successful implementation of this plan will potentially save thousands of animals and mitigate the overall economic impact that disease threats have on producers and the state.

## 2.5 Inventory of existing infrastructure and suitability assessment

### Personnel:

AHD has experienced and knowledgeable employees on staff. We currently have a total of twenty LSIs dispersed throughout the state for routine surveillance tasks and on-demand mediation efforts. The state is currently divided into two regions; each region has an assigned supervisor responsible for management of personnel and activities within that respective region. The field supervisors report to the Agri Division Manager/ADT Program Coordinator stationed in Little Rock. The primary functions of field staff include maintaining a presence at each federally approved livestock market on sale day, identifying and recording ADT data for cattle and other species presented for sale at the market, assisting any available market veterinarian in obtaining information for issuance of iCVIs, vaccination of replacement heifers for Brucellosis, and ensuring compliance with other applicable state regulations. AHD's current field staffing is sufficient in regard to the implementation of ADT in Arkansas.

The State Veterinarian and Agri Division Manager/ADT Program Coordinator play critical roles in implementation of the Arkansas ADT Program by coordinating AHD staff and cooperating with USDA APHIS VS. We have an

administrative staff who record, scan, and file iCVIs, test charts, EIA test charts, and market reports in addition to other duties. A half-time position supports PIN assignments, traceback exercise expertise, and the various disease reporting functions for state and federal programs. In addition, two full-time staffers support the NPIP program exclusively.

AHD receive all market reports electronically; market charts and test charts are routinely entered into CoreOne/SCS. Electronic CVI submission is increasing. A newly deployed software platform includes an eCVI function for Arkansas veterinarians.

#### Capabilities:

The current AHD field staff is working to meet current demands of ADT. The administrative staff has met current data entry requirements. The vacant Field Services Veterinarian position creates a gap in oversight of LSI activities in the field. A strong supervisory structure of LSIs currently patches that gap, and efforts have increased to recruit a highly capable Field Services Veterinarian.

#### Data processing/ Storage:

AHD's server is a Windows 2008R2 server with dual six-core Intel Xeon processor at 3.47GHz with 128GB of ram, and 5 TB of storage. Data is captured in the field by handheld computers and then transmitted via the internet back to the server.

#### Suitability:

The hardware and software updates for use by ALPD personnel is proving to be more than sufficient for the purposes of ADT; newer laptops, smartphones with "hotspot" capability and improved broadband access to our servers are recent advances.

### **III. VISION AND MISSION CONTEXT FOR ADVANCING TRACEABILITY**

#### **3.1 Vision Statement**

The Animal Health Division is focused on rapid response and mediation leading to the control of animal disease challenges. A key component in mitigating the impact of animal disease is the ability to rapidly identify and trace animals through their various touchpoints. AHD embraces the task and strives to implement functional and efficient efforts for the ADT program and progress.

### 3.2 Mission Statement

To safeguard human and animal health, assure food safety and quality, and promote Arkansas livestock and poultry industries for the benefit of our citizens.

## IV. TRACEABILITY REQUIREMENTS

### 4.1 Strategic goal(s)

AHD is operating a state-wide infrastructure for ADT that proves to be compatible with the USDA standards established in the Traceability Rule. A primary objective is to manage a system that identifies animals accurately, enables rapid traceability of animals, and is fully functional in the event of an animal disease outbreak. The implementation of such a system is to enhance the effectiveness of animal disease response in Arkansas and mitigate the negative impacts of disease on industry producers. AHD is working to build an infrastructure that will interface with other all needed entities in accordance with standards.

### 4.2 Programmatic goals (objectives)

- Electronic Records: Continued enhancement of software platform. Achieve 100% of CVIs submitted in electronic format.
- Administration: Maintain administration of official ID devices, data collection, records maintenance, and information sharing.
- Outreach: Support ADT with stakeholders – veterinarians, livestock markets, extension, and producers with emphasis on compliance.



#### 4.3 ADT Trace Performance Measures (TPMs)

AHD will continue to perform trace exercises in coordination with USDA APHIS VS staff to assess capabilities in Trace Performance Measures as below.

TPM	SUMMARY	GOAL
1. Determines the State/Tribe in which the animal was officially identified and notifies that State/Tribe of the reference animal's official ID number	State/Tribe that received the reference animal	95% notification within 1 business day
2. Confirms that it has documentation that an official ID number was issued within its jurisdiction and that it has contact information for the person who received that number.	State/Tribe where the reference animal was officially identified.	<i>Initial-</i> 75% within 5 business days <i>Future-</i> 95% within 2 business days
3. Determines the State or Tribe from which the animal was moved interstate into its jurisdiction and notifies that State or Tribe of the reference animal's official ID number	State/Tribe that received a reference animal	<i>Initial-</i> 95% within 7 business days <i>Future-</i> 95% within 3 business days
4. Determine the address or location from which the reference animal was shipped	State/Tribe that receives notification that a reference animal moved interstate from its jurisdiction (may be the same State/Tribe in #2)	<i>Initial-</i> 75% within 5 business days <i>Future-</i> 95% within 2 business days

## 4.4 Data requirements

### a. Standards for Official Identification:

The following is a list of standards for Official Identification by species:

**Bovine:** Official RFID ear tags

**Ovine/Caprine:** Official ear tags (i.e. Flock, Scrapie or AIN tags) or registration tattoos accompanied by the registration certificate.

**Equine:** Description sufficient to identify the animal, Electronic Identification (ISO 11784/11785 only after 03/11/2014, Digital photographs sufficient to identify the animal.

**Swine:** Official ear tags (RFID, NUES, ASH Premises tags) with unique herd management number, or tattoos (as allowed by the ADT rule).

**Poultry:** NPIP approved devices or methods.

### b. Official ID Distribution and Record Keeping:

Official ID devices are currently distributed by AHD to Accredited Veterinarians and LSIs. ID devices are assigned by number; distribution of official IDs by AHD is maintained via Excel spreadsheet and forwarded to USDA APHIS VS AIC for entry into AIMS. As records of official ID application are received, these records are processed and entered into CoreOne/SCS.

The significance of producer demand will be evaluated to determine how best to move forward with the distribution of official IDs to producers. RFID is favored going forward; AHD will continue to promote use of electronically recordable identification devices.

Approved forms for interstate movement: ICVI, VS 9-3 NPIP, NPIP 90 Day Certificate, NPIP flock certifications, VS 1-27, e-ICVI.

### c. Sharing data with other states:

All iCVIs issued within Arkansas will be forwarded to the receiving state electronically unless otherwise requested by the respective state. Data that is entered into the Arkansas database will be retrieved and provided to other entities and the USDA upon request. Current IT structure does not allow outside access to Arkansas databases, but this possibility will be explored.

## 4.5 Information technology plan

AHD has provided Microsoft capable laptops to all LSIs.

The attainment of this goal enhanced the ability to enter ADT data into the respective databases. AHD's IT department is working to maintain a sound and secure system to support ADT.

## 4.6 Resource requirements

AHD continues to rely on federal and state financial support to work toward our ADT goals. Current resources constraints are primarily personnel-related. Onboarding a Field Services Veterinarian should aid in relieving this constraint.

## 4.7 Organizational needs

The Arkansas Department of Agriculture (ADA) and AHD are in the process of cross-training available administrative personnel to ensure timely data entry and retrieval. The vacant Field Services Veterinarian position is a current need.

### 4.7.1 Executive support

AHD management are cognizant of the critical nature of ADT regarding necessary compliance with rules and regulations (as well as need for effective response to animal disease challenges). We will continue our agency efforts for increasing ADT capabilities and efficiencies in Arkansas.

### 4.7.2 Coordination and oversight procedures

AHD has well established statutory authority for the control and eradication of animal diseases in the state of Arkansas. Functional implementation of ADT is foremost in the toolbox for use in animal disease response. AHD makes every effort to outreach and coordinate with commodity producer groups and allied governmental agencies in regard to implementation and oversight use of ADT.

### 4.7.3 Policy

AHD policy supports the general standards and traceability goals. Our strongest allies are our Category II accredited veterinarians throughout the state. It is easy to encourage them to utilize this new form of individual identification. They are amenable with our tag management system.

### 4.7.4 Staffing

To date, administrative staff have accomplished necessary data processing to help address any potential negative impact on our ADT functionality. The transition to ALL electronic records will allow us to improve efficiency in data entry. Onboarding of a Field Services Veterinarian will improve many aspects of the ADT efforts.

#### 4.7.5 Budget requirements

Budgets for current staff and resources are a combination of federal (ADT Cooperative Agreement Grant) and state (General Revenue) funds. Decreases in either of these funding sources have significant impact on ADT system operations.

#### 4.7.6 Outreach

ADT success will rely on AHD efforts in continuance of current education and outreach to stakeholders and commodity groups in Arkansas. Education and outreach will consist of the following at a minimum.

##### 4.7.6.1 *Accredited veterinarians*

Accredited veterinarians are vital public interface link for the ADT program:

- iCVIs correct and processed for achievement of Traceability Performance Standards.
- AHD will inform veterinarians of needed ADT information via the AHD website, Arkansas State Veterinarian's Quarterly Update, Arkansas Veterinary Medical Association (ARVMA) meetings and newsletters, ARVMA annual convention, and ADA newsletter distribution lists.
- Continuing education is offered once annually regarding traceability to some degree at the ARVMA annual convention. AHD and USDA APHIS VS have one full morning and afternoon dedicated to regulatory topics.
- Enhance use of eCVIs and MIMS; AHD in coordination with USDA APHIS VS will emphasize use and provide instruction to veterinarians on options for transmitting data electronically.

##### 4.7.6.2 *Slaughter plants*

Our large processing plants are for poultry. These tend to be single sourced. The state has gained FSIS meat inspection clearance. Inspectors and a veterinarian are in training. As that scope of regulation develops, disease control will be addressed through pamphlets and placards. The large poultry processors have premovement testing and farm of origin tracing. Our inspection

system will be staffed with AHD employees with ready access to our database.

#### *4.7.6.3 Industry as a whole*

The AHT will provide outreach and education to the industry. Coordination with the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, press releases, webpages, AHD e-mails, industry association meetings, producer group meetings, and social media sources are some methods to consider where available. The primary focus of this effort will be the bovine, and to a lesser extent the small ruminant industries.

#### *4.7.6.4 Livestock Markets*

An AHD Livestock Inspector Manual has been developed. A key goal is reaching market regulatory consistency.

### **4.8 Monitoring and reporting interstate movement activity**

Movement of animals into and out of the state is monitored and reported on a regular basis via weekly activity summaries. Accomplishment is via scanning and tracking of iCVI's (paper and electronic) received by a dedicated AHD staff member. That person also publishes a monthly summary to division management staff.

## **V. ADVANCING TRACEABILITY**

### **5.1 Ranking of priorities for advancement**

- Enhancement of IT infrastructure
  1. IT staff engagement and development
  2. Training of all staff on any new software developments
- Timely data entry into appropriate data storage systems
  1. CoreOne/SCS
  2. e-CVI
  3. ICVI spreadsheet systems
- Education and Outreach
  1. Accredited Veterinarians
  2. Livestock Markets
  3. Producer Groups
- Improve and maintain ID eartag distribution record keeping system
- Utilize any potential for sharing e-data across multiple platforms.
- Develop and enable administrative staff for ease of entry of data into AIMS, EMRS and CoreOne/SCS.

## 5.2 Implementation of objectives

Maintain adequate funding and resources (personnel and equipment) critical to the fulfillment of the ADT goals and objectives.

Summary below - annualized implementation of objectives:

2026

1. Coordinate with USDA APHIS VS and other states in regards to the feasibility of integrating the databases currently in use across state and federal systems.
2. Increase education and outreach efforts with veterinarians in the use of eCVIs.

2027

1. Continue education outreach efforts with all accredited veterinarians in regards to the use of eCVIs.
2. Implement IT upgrades to ensure compatibility with other state and federal systems in data sharing and messaging.

2028

1. Continue to facilitate the use of eCVIs by Arkansas veterinarians.
2. Leverage IT upgrades to further enhance animal traceability and disease outbreak investigation.