Advancing Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) Road Map for Georgia

A Three-Year Plan

Submitted by:

DR. JANEMARIE HENNEBELLE, DVM

STATE VETERINARIAN

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

19 MLK JR DR ATLANTA GA

404-656-3667

Submitted to:

DR. THOMAS BEACORN, DVM
AREA VETERINARIAN FOR GEORGIA
VETERINARY SERVICES
ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

1506 KLONDIKE RD SW #300, CONYERS, GA

770-761-5426

Date: JANUARY 15, 2025

Table of Contents

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fundamental elements of an effective Animal Disease Traceability Plan are to continue increasing the number of eligible cattle, swine, sheep, and goats that have official animal identification, and capturing this information in a database. In addition, ensuring that Georgia large animal veterinarians and all livestock markets have radio frequency identification (RFID) readers and can seamlessly implement and capture electronic official identification.

Georgia has significantly advanced its animal disease traceability program in this direction. Since 2019, the State of Georgia no longer provides paper Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (CVIs). Georgia veterinarians have been provided with a list of approved electronic CVI platforms that they can transition to once they run out of paper CVIs. As of 2024, Georgia offers veterinarians a free electronic CVI platform for small and large animal movements. Three live webinars were offered to assist veterinarians on how to use the new platform. As of January 2020, Georgia no longer offers paper Equine Event Permits (EEPs), replacing them with the digital Extended Equine CVI (EECVI). These electronic options are more efficient and enhance animal disease traceability (ADT) by improving record keeping, storing, and retrieval, reducing human error and the length of time it takes to conduct disease traces.

In August 2020, Georgia implemented USAHERDS as our main database to manage traceability information. This software program captures data from CVIs, test and vaccine records, commuter herd agreements, tagging charts and movement data from livestock markets and tag allocation records. USAHERDS is also used to issue premises identification numbers and manage disease incidents.

Throughout the past several years, we spent a significant amount of time and resources on transitioning all our Georgia large animal veterinarians to the use of official electronic identification. Our efforts include personal visits to veterinary clinics and providing electronic identification tags (EID) along with a portable RFID handheld reader to 34 clinics.

Currently, Georgia only issues electronic identification ear tags to veterinarians, producers, and livestock markets. Georgia continues to support our livestock producers with personal visits and training when they are prepared to implement RFID technology into their cattle operations. One RFID handheld reader was distributed to a livestock producer who maintains an official tagging site agreement. Beginning in 2022, a significant amount of time has been spent within our livestock markets to develop a plan to seamlessly transition to EID for eligible cattle. As of October 2024, all cattle auction markets have been transitioned to EID tags, and 11 livestock markets have been issued an RFID handheld reader.

Timeline proposed for this plan:

- **FY 2025:**

  - Continuing to capture official ID into USAHERDS (CVIs, test and vaccine records, market tagging)

- Provide funding for livestock field inspectors

- Provide funding for ADT Program Manager and ADT Veterinarian

- Provide funding for data entry personnel

- Continuing to promote the usage of official electronic identification in livestock markets, exhibition animals, disease investigations, herd work, and veterinary clinics

- Encourage and support infrastructure for reading electronic identification at approved livestock markets

- Continuing to provide training to accredited veterinarians, livestock markets, and Georgia Department of Agriculture (GDA) personnel in the use of electronic identification reading equipment and data reporting

- Continuing support and encouragement of accredited veterinarians to use electronic identification, electronic readers, and electronic documents

- Continuing support and encouragement of large Georgia cattle producers to the use of official electronic identification

- Affect rule change to require official electronic identification for livestock exhibition in Georgia

- Support market personnel in application and usage of official EID at approved livestock markets

- Provide funding for required upgrades of issued electronic readers at exhibition locations, livestock markets and veterinary clinics

- **FY 2026:**

  - Continuing to capture official identification (ID) into USAHERDS (CVIs, test and vaccine records, market tagging)

  - Provide funding for livestock field inspectors

  - Provide funding for ADT Program Manager and ADT Veterinarian

  - Provide funding for data entry personnel

  - Continuing to promote the usage of official electronic identification in livestock markets, exhibition animals, disease investigations, herd work, and veterinary clinics

- Encourage and support infrastructure for reading electronic identification at approved livestock markets

- Continuing to provide training to accredited veterinarians, livestock markets, and GDA personnel in the use of electronic identification reading equipment and data reporting

- Continuing support and encouragement of accredited veterinarians to use electronic identification, electronic readers, and electronic documents

- Begin to transition accredited veterinarians to the use of electronic tuberculosis (TB) test chart and vaccination test chart offered at no cost by VET CVI platform

- Continuing support and encouragement of large Georgia cattle producers to the use of official electronic identification

- Support livestock exhibitions in Georgia to capture electronic identification

- Support market personnel in application and usage of official EID at approved livestock markets

- Provide funding for required upgrades of issued electronic readers at livestock markets and veterinary clinics

- Investigate the implementation and promotion of value-added livestock programs for Georgia farms that utilize official EID

- Support and identify additional electronic CVI platforms and tag manufacturers for Georgia producers and veterinarians to encourage competitive options are available

- **FY 2027:**

  - Continuing to capture official ID into USAHERDS (CVIs, test and vaccine records, market tagging)
  - Provide funding for livestock field inspectors
  - Provide funding for ADT Program Manager and ADT Veterinarian
  - Provide funding for data entry personnel
  - Continuing to promote the usage of official electronic identification in livestock markets, exhibition animals, disease investigations, herd work, and veterinary clinics
  - Encourage and support infrastructure for reading electronic identification at approved livestock markets

- o Continuing to provide training to accredited veterinarians, livestock markets, and GDA personnel in the use of electronic identification reading equipment and data reporting
- o Continuing support and encouragement of accredited veterinarians to use electronic identification, electronic readers, and electronic documents
- o Final transition to accredited veterinarians to the use of electronic TB test chart and vaccination test chart offered at no cost by VET CVI platform
- o Continuing support and encouragement of large Georgia cattle producers to the use of official electronic identification
- o Affect rule change to require official electronic identification for livestock exhibition in Georgia
- o Support market personnel in application and usage of official EID at approved livestock markets
- o Provide funding for required upgrades of issued electronic readers at exhibition locations, livestock markets and veterinary clinics
- o Implement tag retirement at Georgia licensed slaughter plants

II. CURRENT TRACEABILITY SITUATION

2.1 Who are we?

Dr. Janemarie Hennebelle, State Veterinarian, Georgia Department of Agriculture and Dr. Thomas Beacorn, Area Veterinarian in Charge, United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Veterinary Services (VS).

- **Who are the primary constituents?**
  Georgia Department of Agriculture

- **Who are the external constituents?**
  Georgia Agribusiness Council, Georgia Cattlemen's Association, Georgia Extension (4-H), Georgia Farm Bureau, Georgia Livestock Marketing Association, University of Georgia, Future Farmers of America (FFA), Georgia Milk producers, Georgia Pork producers, Georgia Poultry Lab Network and USDA APHIS Veterinary Services.

- **What does statewide mean?**
  Statewide includes the State of Georgia.

- **How is traceability data used internally, externally?**
  Traceability data is primarily used for tracing animal disease and for education of producers and veterinarians.

- **What values guide the animal disease traceability system?**
    Consistent and reliable collection of animal ID data allows us to perform animal disease tracing rapidly and accurately.

2.2 Where are we now?

Currently, when GDA receives notification from a laboratory that we have a positive test result for a disease of interest, the State Veterinarian's office initiates a trace and assigns it to the appropriate animal regulatory program. Based on the data obtained, field personnel will visit the market or other premises where the animal was tested and examine the paper (or electronic) records to determine where the animal was most recently located. Currently, requests for information are handled during regular business hours.

The animal disease traceability program in Georgia, and therefore this road map, will focus on cattle, transitional swine, sheep, goats, and horses. We feel that our ability to trace poultry, which is Georgia's largest animal agriculture sector, is sufficient. The poultry industry in Georgia maintains data that includes the location of all poultry operations in the state. The poultry industry works closely with GDA to provide global positioning system (GPS) data for premise identification. We have tested the system and have been able to demonstrate that we can use this system to trace both commercial and backyard poultry. We also feel that the current system for traceability of commercial swine in Georgia is sufficient. Breeding swine are officially identified and tested at approved markets then quarantined to premises until official test results are obtained. Swine that go through non-breeding sales are always consigned to slaughter and do not return home.

Exhibition swine are required to be officially identified when tested for brucellosis and pseudorabies. EID is strongly encouraged and widely used for exhibition swine in Georgia.

2.3 Strengths and Weaknesses

- **What are the strengths of the organization in terms of technology, human resources, personnel capabilities, etc.?**

Strengths include the presence of a well-trained animal regulatory program and field force. Established protocols are routinely followed. GDA has employed a full time ADT Program Manager since 2019. GDA also has employed two full-time personnel that enter data related to ADT. USAHERDS is used as the primary means of data collection, reporting and storage. Due to extensive outreach with stakeholders, strong working relationships have been developed to improve the Georgia's Traceability program.

- **What are the weaknesses in terms of "lack of" technology, human resources, personnel capabilities, etc.?**

Although we have significantly improved upon our digital capabilities, further progress is required. Areas for improvement are:

- Improved ADT compliance of livestock markets, producers, and veterinarians
- Continued training of animal health regulatory personnel
- Continued educational outreach efforts for Georgia citizens
- Personnel changes resulting in open positions

2.4 Opportunities and Threats

If a foreign animal disease or other disease of concern enters Georgia, or if there is a natural disaster that affects livestock or poultry in Georgia, having animal identification and an established traceability system will allow us to respond to these events much quicker than if such a system was not in place. The ability to utilize electronic data would provide for a more efficient emergency response.

2.5 Inventory of existing infrastructure and suitability assessment

- **Human resources**
  - Existing: two full-time data entry/administrative positions, one ADT Program Manager, livestock & poultry field forces, five veterinarians
  - Most resources listed above have a limited amount of time devoted to ADT based on other priorities and functions assigned to the positions.

- **Space availability**
  Current office space will be used.

- **Connectivity resources, both in office and in the field**
  Standard connectivity is present in the office. Field forces are equipped with smart phones and computers with wireless connectivity capability, although connectivity is dependent upon location.

- **Access to USDA animal disease traceability and animal health information resources**
  Data entry and epidemiology personnel have access currently, which meets present needs.

- **Organization of all existing paper record systems used to access animal disease traceability or animal health information**

  Paper and electronic CVIs, vaccination records, test records, commuter herd agreements and movement data, EECVIs, and disease investigations that may involve the use of official identification are all currently being recorded in USAHERDS.

- **Computerized data management capability, including present storage size, speed, security, etc.**

    We currently have information technology (IT) support to maintain our GDA smart phones and computers. We utilize USAHERDS for data entry and storage. GDA utilizes department-managed server space Speed and security are managed by the GDA IT division.

- **Automated data capture capability**

    GDA has acquired wand readers, panel readers and handheld units through Cooperative agreement funds. In addition, all field personnel are equipped with a smart phone application for Bluetooth EID data capture.

III. VISION AND MISSION CONTEXT FOR ADVANCING TRACEABILITY

3.1 Vision Statement

The vision of the Georgia Department of Agriculture is to continue to be a globally recognized leader in agricultural excellence through a commitment to safety, quality, growth, and innovation.

3.2 Mission Statement

The mission of the Georgia Department of Agriculture is to protect consumers, promote agriculture both locally and globally, and assist our customers using education, technology and a professional workforce.

IV. TRACEABILITY REQUIREMENTS

The following categories must be described in the Road Map:

4.1 Strategic goal(s)

USDA overarching strategic goals of ADT:
1. Enhance electronic sharing of data among Federal and State animal health officials, veterinarians, and industry; including sharing basic ADT data with the Federal Animal Health Events Repository (AHER);
2. Increase use of electronic ID tags for animals requiring individual identification to make the transmission of data more efficient.
3. Enhance the ability to track animals from birth to slaughter through a system that allows tracking data points to be connected; and
4. Elevate the discussion with States and industry to work toward a system where animal health certificates are electronically transmitted from private veterinarians to State animal health officials.

- Entities must develop or implement a State-wide, Tribal-wide, or Territory-wide infrastructure for advancing ADT compatible with State, Tribe, Territory and USDA standards.

GDA goals:

The strategic goal of this program is official identification of eligible species and data collection/storage/retrieval to improve traceability. Cattle, swine, sheep and goats will be the species of focus.

We will evaluate our progress and then improve and refine our processes.

4.2   Programmatic goals (objectives)

The programmatic goals are as follows (they will be the same for the three years of this road map, possibly growing each year):

- Increase the number of registered premises
- Continue providing EID panel or wand readers at livestock markets to facilitate the use of electronic tag application and data collection.
- Continue outreach to veterinarians, producers, livestock markets, and exhibitors on the use of EID
- Encourage the distribution of tags directly from tag manufacturers to requestors (e.g. veterinarians, producers, livestock markets, exhibitors).
- Ensure eCVIs are accurately completed and submitted on time.
- Improve electronic data collection, transmission, storage, and retrieval methods to meet the demand required for efficient use of the growing volume of data.
- Continue to research newly improved data collection and database solutions to ensure methods being deployed are current

4.3   ADT Trace Performance Measures (TPMs)

GDA has consistently demonstrated the ability to meet performance standards and execute National Priority Traces in a timely manner. Transitioning to USAHERDS, EID, and electronic readers and documents has directly benefited our ability to achieve performance goals.

4.4   Data requirements

Location identification will be through National Premises ID numbers (NPINS) issued primarily by the Georgia Department of Agriculture using USAHERDS. Georgia will accept all forms of Official ID outlined by USDA standards and registration tattoos and brands will be accepted when accompanied by official registry paperwork. Once a NPIN is obtained livestock owners and official tagging sites can apply for 840 RFID official ID tags issued by GDA. Approximately 104,000 official ID tags are expected to be distributed or purchased per year.

GDA will provide 840 RFID tags to veterinarians, auction markets, and producers (or other requestors) who have a NPIN.

USAHERDS is the primary database that is utilized for EID tag allocations. A requestor (i.e. producer, veterinarian, etc.) contacts the Georgia Department of Agriculture for tags. Utilizing an official NPIN, an allocation record will be generated within USAHERDS and the tags will be shipped directly to the requestor. Producers are notified that the tags are to be used for their animals only and are not to be given out to other people, such as their neighbors. Proper records should be kept for 5 years.

Producers interested in a commuter herd agreement are required to apply and obtain an official commuter herd agreement. This agreement will be signed by all state animal health officials involved.

Georgia approved tagging sites may utilize the approved Georgia interstate movement document. This document is accepted by the following states: Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

Upon another state's request, the data will be furnished to the requesting state by phone or e-mail during business hours (the data may be shared outside of business hours on an emergency basis).

Groups and lots are not utilized routinely in Georgia. Most eligible animals are sold individually by the head or by the pound. We will rely on producers to keep this information (for example, pen numbers).

4.5   Information technology plan

- State funds are used to purchase computers for office use, but Federal funds will be needed to support the other components, such as electronic reading infrastructure.
- Continue to provide electronic alternatives to veterinarians to reduce paper records.
- Continue to research and evaluate alternative and new database solutions.

4.6   Resource requirements

- RFID readers, tagging applicators, RFID ear tags are needed for all livestock markets
- Continued cooperative agreement Traceability funding for the purchase of EID tags and readers is required.
- Funding for shipping EID ear tags to producers, accredited veterinarians, and auction markets
- Additional personnel

4.7   Organizational needs

GDA Animal Industry Division includes livestock/poultry field forces (LPFF). LPFF assists the Animal Health Division with ADT management and implementation. Currently GDA Animal Health Division has a full-time ADT Program Manager and a field Veterinary Medical Officer that has expertise in ADT.

Other programs within Animal Industry, such as equine and companion animal field forces can be leveraged if necessary. These programs routinely work together on various animal health needs.

4.7.1   Executive support

Commissioner Harper has indicated that he is in support of animal disease traceability. The Chief Operating Officer of the Georgia Department of Agriculture holds regular monthly meetings at which time the Commissioner is briefed on the progress of animal disease traceability in Georgia.

4.7.2   Coordination and oversight procedures

Dr. Janemarie Hennebelle, State Veterinarian, is primarily responsible for advancing animal disease traceability. ADT coordination and oversight procedures are implemented by the ADT Program Coordinator within the Animal Health Division. In addition, outreach to industry and input from producers, livestock markets, veterinarians and exhibitors provide feedback for further development of Georgia's ADT program.

Multi-State meetings are held to discuss traceability issues and to coordinate regional interstate movement agreements.

4.7.3   Policy

Southern Animal Health Association (SAHA) has contributed to policy discussions and may continue working in parallel with stakeholders to develop a policy or recommendation for our regional efforts.

4.7.4   Staffing

We manage Georgia as a cooperative program with State and Federal personnel and will continue to do so. Personnel needed to implement the plan include a hired ADT program manager, current field staff, current data entry personnel and additional field and data entry staff. Further training of personnel in information technology will be essential to the goals of Georgia's ADT Road Map.

4.7.5   Budget requirements

Funding for animal disease traceability is through the Georgia Department of Agriculture general budget as well as the Federal cooperative agreements. GDA Animal Health Division does not receive any specifically allocated funds for ADT. Changes to the federal ADT framework have necessitated

budget increases while the amount of cooperative agreement funding GDA receives has remained relatively stagnant over time.

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

Successful implementation of any plan to advance animal disease traceability cannot be achieved without outreach to constituents primarily affected by the plan.

4.7.6.1   Accredited veterinarians

Accredited veterinarians are regularly updated about ADT within Georgia through written communications, the Georgia Veterinary Medical Association (their newsletter, website, etc.), the GDA website, GDA's Market Bulletin, e-mailings from GDA directly to veterinarians, during the accreditation core orientation and one-on-one accreditation visits, and at state or national meetings.

Continuing education to improve data quality relative to animal health information systems being used and to encourage the submission of official forms in a timely manner will be provided by State and Federal field veterinary medical officers. They have and will continue making personal visits to mixed and large animal/food animal practitioners in their sections. These visits will also be used to encourage the use of eCVIs and electronic documents.

4.7.6.2   Livestock Markets

Continuing education efforts will be conducted in a joint effort by the ADT Program Manager and GDA livestock inspectors while they are working at the livestock markets and when federal employees are conducting quarterly inspections of the markets. The State and Federal employees will be able to answer questions and if the market has concerns or problems that the field employees cannot answer, they will refer them to the GDA Animal Health Office or the Georgia Area Office. In addition, market visits will be conducted by GDA State Veterinarian and/or ADT Program Manager as needed.

All eligible Georgia livestock markets are approved official tagging sites. Traceability information from livestock markets is obtained by field personnel at the request of the State Veterinarian. Upon request, GDA ADT Coordinator will query all available electronic records and associated databases. Information obtained will be forwarded to the district field office and assigned to the appropriate field personnel. They will then coordinate with the livestock market to obtain buyer/seller information. This information is routed back to the ADT Coordinator and State Veterinarian for action.

4.7.6.3   Industry as a whole

Industry (specifically cattle, swine, and small ruminants) are regularly informed about Georgia's ADT program through the Georgia Cattlemen's Association, Georgia Extension, 4-H, the Georgia Farm Monitor, Georgia Farm Bureau, the Livestock Marketing Association, the University of

Georgia, FFA, Georgia Dairy Goat Breeders Association, Georgia Sheep and Wool Growers, Georgia Milk Producers, Georgia Pork Producers, and through GDA publications (website, Market Bulletin). GDA has formed good partnerships with industry to facilitate information sharing.

4.8 Monitoring and reporting interstate movement activity

All CVIs (import and export) and approved Alternate Movement Documents are counted and reviewed for data capture and ADT compliance. In addition, the number of animals, by species, are counted and recorded to provide data for quarterly/annual reports.

Official identification devices are managed and distributed using allocation systems within USAHERDS. NPINS are required prior to distribution of official identification devices. Allocation records are queried quarterly and annually for data reporting.

GDA is continuing to transition to digital collection, storage, and reporting to increase efficiency and provide time to focus on compliance. We will report the data as requested.

V. ADVANCING TRACEABILITY

5.1 Ranking of priorities for advancement

- Maximize the implementation and continued use of official EID across Georgia
- Maximize the use of secure electronic data collection, storage, and retrieval utilizing USAHERDS
- Distribution of official EID tags in a sustainable and equitable fashion statewide
- Ensure RFID readers are available for use at all livestock markets
- Monitor all movement records for data accuracy and compliance

5.2 Implementation of objectives

- Maximize the implementation and continued use of official EID across Georgia
  - o Continuing support and education of Georgia cattle producers and veterinarians utilizing EID ear tags
  - o Continue ADT Demonstrations and trainings for livestock producers, auction markets, veterinarians, and livestock exhibitions in the use of EID reading equipment
- Maximize the use of secure electronic data collection, storage, and retrieval utilizing USAHERDS
  - o Continue capturing official ID into USAHERDS (CVIs, test and vaccine records, market tagging)
- Distribution of official EID tags in a sustainable and equitable fashion statewide
  - o Announcements that official EID is available from the GDA Animal Health Division through stakeholders, newsletters, emails, GDA website, education, and outreach.

- Ensure RFID readers are available for use at all livestock markets
    - Tagging efforts will continue at livestock markets. All markets are approved Official Tagging Sites and are responsible for application of official identification of eligible species
- Monitor all movement records for data accuracy and compliance
    - Monitoring data in USAHerds to ensure its accuracy and data is searchable