1 United States Department of Agriculture
2 National Animal Identification System
3 2009 Listening Session
4
5 Transcript of proceedings
6 9:05 a.m., Thursday, June 18, 2009
7 3649 Mission Inn Avenue, Riverside, California
8 before J'ana Siegers, CSR Number 10845
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1 MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone. I'll
2 invite you at this time to take your seats. My name
3 is Deborah Millis [phonetic]. I work for the United
4 States Department of Agriculture, and my role here
5 today is to be the moderator and make sure that
6 everyone has a chance during the public-speaking part
7 to get to the microphone.
8 - - -
9 MODERATOR: Thank you. As we begin
10 today, we have a few guests who would like to welcome
11 you as well, and who I'd like to begin with is --
12 before I say that, let me also mention Alfredo
13 Laderos is here, and he is a Spanish-speaking
14 interpreter. If you could just indicate if you need
15 some assistance with that, we would be happy to
16 oblige you in that.
17 So today I would like to welcome, from
18 our sponsor partner group, Mr. Ed Soza here to say a
19 few words. Ed is from the Soboba Band here in
20 Riverside County, and he'll have a few opening
21 remarks for you.
22 MR. SOZA: Hello. My name is Edward
23 Soza. I'm a delegate for Intertribal Agriculture
24 Council, headquarters in Billings, Montana. I'm the
25 director for California and Nevada, mainly work with

1 the Southern California -- or California tribes and
2 that.
3 I'd like to thank everybody for coming,
4 and hopefully we'll have -- I've seen a few faces
5 here that I've met before, very well-informed people;
6 so if you have any questions, they can answer them.
7 That's pretty much guaranteed. I'd like to thank you
8 all for coming once again. Thank you.
9 MODERATOR: I might also point out that
10 Ed Soza and his group have been generous enough to
11 provide the refreshments that are in the room
12 adjacent to us, so please feel free during the
13 meeting to get up and move about, if you need to, and
14 avail yourself. Also at the back of the room, we
15 have water, so we want everybody to stay hydrated.
16 Our brains work better when we do that.
17 The next individual I'd like to introduce
18 is Mr. Victor Velez, and he is from the California
19 Department of Food and Agriculture.
20 MR. VELEZ: Thank you.
21 On behalf of the Secretary of Agriculture
22 A.G. Kawamura and Dr. Brandmeyer [phonetic] and
23 [inaudible], I want to welcome those of you that came
24 from other states, the USDA personnel and others.
25 And those livestock producers that came here today,

1 some of you drove many hours. We thank you for
2 coming here.
3 I think it's really important that you
4 contribute to the development of any program that a
5 state has. Whether you are for or against, your
6 coming here really assists us to be able to develop a
7 program that is able to meet the needs of each of
8 you. So we really appreciate you being here, and
9 again, I thank you on behalf of Dr. Brandmeyer and
10 Mr. Kawamura.
11 MODERATOR: And I just want to tell you a
12 little bit about how the day will go. This morning's
13 session is about public comment, and several of you
14 signed up to comment. And how we are doing that is
15 through a lottery system. We'll draw some numbers
16 and ask you to come up, and each in turn you'll have
17 three minutes to express your viewpoints.
18 Now, just so you know, in the afternoon,
19 we don't have that kind of a limitation, so you'll
20 have more ability in the breakout sessions to
21 elaborate on possible suggestions that you might have
22 or solutions that you might want to bring forward or
23 any concerns that you might have. So you'll have
24 ample opportunity to do that, because our purpose
25 here from the Department of Agriculture is to listen

1 to what those concerns are and to listen to any
2 solutions that you have and to listen to any thoughts
3 that you might have about this program.
4 So without further ado, I'm going to
5 begin with an introductory video from Secretary
6 Vilsack. So we'll have just a moment to set that up,
7 and then that will be followed by some words from our
8 presiding official.
9 (Video played.)
10 MODERATOR: Thank you. And now before I
11 introduce our presiding official from Department of
12 Agriculture, I would like to ask all of my fellow
13 employees of the Department of Agriculture to just
14 stand, so you can have a sense of who those
15 individuals are in this room.
16 Some of us are -- like I am a
17 facilitator. We work with groups. Some of us are
18 trainers. Some of us are technical writers. There
19 are a few animal ID experts in the room as well, so
20 we'll do our best to assist you in listening and to
21 address concerns that you may have, as much as we're
22 able to, but the focus is on you having a voice and
23 you being able to tell our secretary what your
24 thoughts are on this.
25 And towards that end, let me also mention

1 the microphones. Now, we're not all comfortable
2 talking into microphones. I do it a lot in my job,
3 but I'm never comfortable in front of one. I'm going
4 to ask you to overcome that today because the way
5 that we are using the microphones is to capture your
6 comments. We also have a court reporter working with
7 us over here, so the whole morning session will be
8 recorded in that way.
9 And then in our breakout sessions, we're
10 going to ask you also to speak into the microphones
11 and chat, and that's a way for us to capture those
12 comments so that we can pass them on to the
13 secretary. When our next speaker is done, I'll tell
14 you how the rest of the morning is going to go in
15 terms of the logistics.
16 So I now want to introduce Dr. Kevin
17 Varner. He is the area veterinarian in charge in the
18 state of California and in Nevada.
19 Dr. Varner?
20 DR. VARNER: Thank you.
21 Good morning. My name is Kevin Varner,
22 and I, too, would like to welcome you to this
23 listening session concerning the national animal
24 health -- National Animal Identification System. I
25 want to thank you for taking your valuable time away

1 from your farms, your jobs, your homes to share your
2 views. As Secretary Vilsack just said, the point of
3 this meeting is that we're here to listen to you --
4 okay? -- and listen to what you have to say.
5 We all play important roles in ensuring
6 that the nation maintains a safe and abundant food
7 supply both for the American people and for people
8 around the world. We believe that the National
9 Animal ID System is a very important tool to help us
10 accomplish our mission of protecting our nation's
11 livestock from disease.
12 In the event of a disease -- in the event
13 of a disease outbreak, it will give us much more
14 timely data to inform our decision-making and speed
15 our response efforts and enable us to better focus on
16 control and eradication efforts on those animals that
17 are infected or exposed to a disease. This should
18 translate into shorter, cheaper, and more effective
19 disease-response programs that cause less disruption
20 to you and to your neighbors. And after the
21 outbreaks, the system -- with this system, we'll be
22 in a better position to negotiate the reopening of
23 overseas markets that are critical to you and to our
24 economy.
25 We realize that many of you -- I realize

1 that many of you do not agree with these points, but
2 let me be clear. Although we disagree, we respect
3 you. You know, all the -- the USDA, we respect your
4 opinions and your ideas for moving the support
5 program forward. That's why we're here today.
6 Secretary Vilsack said we need a system in place that
7 protects the health of United States livestock, but
8 he has been very clear in saying the system needs to
9 have the support of a majority of producers, both
10 large and small. Our goal for these listening
11 sessions is to stand back and to listen, listen to
12 you, and we are ready to capture the creative
13 solutions that will no doubt emerge on issues that
14 have divided us.
15 We'll be tape-recording all the sessions
16 today so that we'll be sure to capture all your
17 concerns and ideas to pass them to the Secretary.
18 However, if for some reason the three minutes isn't
19 enough or you have something else you want to talk
20 about and you don't get a chance to share everything
21 you wanted to today, we're also seeking your written
22 comments.
23 Your comments can be submitted through
24 the Web site noted on the information sheet handout.
25 I don't really want to read this, but it's USDA --

1 usda.gov slash -- forward slash, that thing, but it's
2 in the information sheet handout, another opportunity
3 to provide written or additional comments. I
4 personally assure you that every written comment will
5 be submitted, will be read and carefully considered
6 before we go forward.
7 Our discussion sessions later today will
8 focus on important issues that producers have raised,
9 such as implementation costs, impact on small-scale
10 farmers, privacy, confidentiality, and liability.
11 These discussion sessions will also allow you to
12 weigh in on any concerns you have regarding the
13 premises registration, animal identification, and
14 animal tracking.
15 But again, we want to hear your concerns
16 and listen for solutions not only on these topics but
17 on any aspect of the system. This is your meeting to
18 tell us what you feel -- to tell us what you feel.
19 We need to know and to understand your perspective on
20 the system. At the end of the day, we want to learn
21 what program options you could support so that we can
22 pass that information to Secretary Vilsack. This
23 information will be critical in helping him determine
24 how USDA, in partnership with you, can forge a more
25 effective, successful, and acceptable system to

1 protect animal health.
2 Before we move to hear your comments, I
3 want to say that in looking around the room, there's
4 one thing I think we can agree on. It's our desire
5 for animals throughout America to remain healthy and
6 to be free of foreign diseases. It's the foundation
7 mission for USDA to protect American agriculture. I
8 hope that that unifying focus will be the compass
9 that will guide our discussions today and in the
10 future.
11 In that spirit, I would like echo what
12 Secretary Vilsack said one more time. Thank you all
13 in advance for extending your professional courtesy
14 and respect to everyone in this meeting. Let's keep
15 in mind that maintaining an open and respectful
16 dialogue will get us farther down the road toward
17 developing an acceptable system that fits everyone.
18 Thank you again. I, and your Secretary,
19 are very much looking forward to hearing your
20 thoughts, concerns, and solutions.
21 MODERATOR: Thank you, Dr. Varner.
22 And now I want to call your attention to
23 the packet that you registered with. And when you
24 open it, if you look on the right side, you'll find a
25 pen and a pad of paper. You'll also find a printout

1 of a PowerPoint presentation. We won't be delivering
2 it here today because we want to have the opportunity
3 to focus on the comments that you have, but as you
4 look at it, if you have questions about the things
5 that you find in there, give a "heads up" to any one
6 of us for USDA, and we'll be happy to get you a
7 clarification on what you find in that document.
8 On the other side, you'll also find a
9 letter welcoming you from Dr. John Clifford, the
10 deputy administrator of USDA's veterinary services.
11 Behind that is the news release introducing these
12 meetings, and then finally behind that is a very
13 important document because it is the information on
14 how you can give us your further comments.
15 A lot of people, when they hear
16 information in one of these meetings, they have more
17 ideas later and they didn't get a chance to say it
18 here, so maybe you want to write it in, and you have
19 many opportunities to do that. There is a Federal
20 rule-making portal, and the link to that is on there,
21 or at least the Web address, the URL. There's the
22 NAIS Web site. That's another way.
23 And then if you look on the back of that,
24 there's also information about the address -- I think
25 it's on that sheet. Yeah, it's at the very bottom.

1 I'm sorry. It's at the very bottom of the first
2 side, right above the word "over." That's the
3 physical address, if you're like me and you don't
4 have a computer at home. We still send physical
5 mail. So you can do it any of those three ways. I
6 hope that you'll have ample opportunity today.
7 So in the first part of our meeting, as I
8 said, we're going to hear from as many of you as
9 possible. And to do that, we'll be using our lottery
10 system. As you signed in, many of you indicated that
11 you might want to speak, so we'll call your numbers.
12 And I'll remind you of a few things.
13 We'll ask you to speak into the microphone. If it's
14 not in the right location for you, you can actually
15 pop it out of here and hold it in your hand.
16 When each speaker comes up, they'll have
17 three minutes to talk, and we have a light system
18 over here that will kind of give you a visual cue.
19 It's in this first row, and I'll be sitting over
20 there next to it. When the green light is on, you
21 have the opportunity to speak, but at about 30
22 seconds before your three minutes is up, it will
23 begin to flash yellow, and then the red light will
24 come on at the end of that time.
25 So one of the things that we've noticed,

1 or at least that I have noticed, I've done several of
2 these sessions, and what I find is that people are
3 very articulate in their comments and they have been
4 very respectful about yielding the floor following
5 their three minutes. And what I want to assure you
6 of is that I will help to make sure that that can
7 happen. You get up here, you may get nervous and
8 forget the time. If you're time does run out, I may
9 give you a gentle reminder that the next person is
10 ready to speak.
11 In the afternoon, because our groups may
12 be a little bit smaller, you'll have a lot more
13 opportunity to have that microphone. We want to hear
14 your concerns, and facilitators will be in those
15 rooms, and their role is going to be to make sure
16 that you get time with that microphone and that, you
17 know, people who have a great deal of enthusiasm and
18 passion for this don't overpower some of the others
19 who may be very quiet and, you know, may be more
20 reticent to speak. So we may ask, "If you haven't
21 had a chance to speak, do you want to?" So we'll
22 make every opportunity to have that happen
23 effectively. And depending on how quickly we move
24 through this morning, again, we'll take our break at
25 around noon.

1 And also, the other thing I'll point out
2 on your packets is each of your packets have a
3 colored dot, and those are just a way for us to
4 randomly organize the groups. And if you should
5 break out into three different groups, we'll ask the
6 red group to go to one room, the blue group to go to
7 the other, and the yellow group to go to the other.
8 With these numbers, I'm not sure how that will work
9 out. We'll figure that out in the meantime.
10 But if you came with your family -- I've
11 seen some families here -- you don't need to
12 separate. If you're here with your friend, you don't
13 need to separate. Just go to the room where you feel
14 comfort. This was just to sort of distribute the
15 numbers a little more evenly. When all of this is
16 done, the transcripts will be available at some point
17 following all of the public meetings.
18 So the next thing we're going to do is
19 draw five tickets at a time. We're going to ask you
20 to come up and sit in these chairs, and when the
21 speaker before you yields the floor after their
22 three minutes, we'll ask just the next one to come
23 up.
24 And, again, people have been very
25 respectful at these meetings, and we have every

1 expectation that that will occur here too, so I want
2 to thank you in advance for that. Like Dr. Varner
3 said, you may disagree or you may even agree with
4 whoever is at the podium. All I'm asking is that
5 each of you have a chance, and that my job is to make
6 sure that anyone who wishes to do so can do that.
7 So each person speaking will have
8 three minutes. Speak into the microphone. Use the
9 light indicator to help you stay on track. And if
10 that, you know, escapes you, I may give you the high
11 sign from my chair over there and ask you to allow
12 the next speaker to talk. So thank you.
13 All right. Number 102, 102 if you'll
14 look at your ticket you got when you signed in.
15 Number 102.
16 Number 101. Just come on up 102, 101.
17 Number 100. Number 100.
18 How about Number 96? Anyone with 96?
19 How about 95?
20 And I did call Number 100, yes.
21 And I think with the numbers who have
22 asked to speak, we're not going to have any problem
23 getting everyone on.
24 So I'll ask you here on the end to just
25 come up now. Thanks.

1 MS. MICHAELS: I am Ann Marie Michaels.
2 I am a mother and consumer in Los Angeles. I took
3 the day off today to come and voice my concerns about
4 NAIS.
5 As a mother, I am responsible for feeding
6 my family. I am deeply concerned about food safety
7 in this country and about the health of our -- of my
8 family. I buy my family's meat and dairy products
9 and eggs from small family farms, 90 percent of my
10 family's meat, eggs, and dairy. I do not buy meat or
11 dairy from factory farms or confinement animal
12 feeding operations because I do not believe they are
13 safe, nor do I feel they are nutritious. I believe
14 that milk, meat, and eggs from animals on a pasture
15 are absolutely essential for my family's health.
16 It is my duty to provide these foods to
17 my family, which is why I am opposed to the National
18 Animal Identification System. I feel that NAIS
19 threatens small farms and homesteaders who are
20 already struggling to provide healthy, nutritious
21 food to their local communities.
22 I'm a big believer in local food.
23 There's a movement happening in local food in this
24 country, and I think that if we make it harder for
25 these producers to get food out to their local

1 communities, we can potentially cripple them. I'm
2 very scared about that. I would actually like to
3 help support these farmers and food producers to
4 enable them to get more food, healthy food to their
5 local communities.
6 If anything, any regulations I would like
7 to see, I would like to see more regulations for
8 CAFOs, or confinement animal feeding operations. I
9 believe these facilities are inherently unsafe. I
10 also believe there's a lot of cruelty to animals in
11 these facilities, and I believe that the food that is
12 produced is much less healthy, and I believe that
13 it's making us sick.
14 I would also like to see more regulations
15 and labeling of genetically modified organisms, or
16 GMOs. I would also like to see more regulations of
17 the antibiotics being administered to animals in
18 CAFOs. I believe that CAFOs, GMOs, and antibiotics
19 are the biggest threats to animal and human safety in
20 this country.
21 I am also strongly opposed to
22 microchipping animals. I feel this is a massive
23 violation of privacy, and I do believe it's
24 unconstitutional. I agree with Joe Salitan
25 [phonetic], the farmer who said that we should have

1 an NRA for our food supply in this country. Thank
2 you.
3 MS. BLOCH: My name is Victoria Bloch. I
4 am a consumer. I'm also a small-business owner, and
5 I took the day off from running my business to come
6 out and speak on this issue that I feel is so
7 important to each consumer and each farmer and each
8 rancher in this country.
9 As I have read through the PowerPoint
10 that was thoughtfully provided in the packet today
11 and the USDA Web site, as well as commentary from a
12 number of organizations that support farmers and
13 ranchers and consumers and our overall health, I've
14 come to believe that this is a program that is
15 designed to fail. It's expensive, it's extremely
16 intrusive, and it does not truly address the issue of
17 animal health.
18 The issue of animal health begins with
19 the individual animal, not by tracing disease back
20 from some specified point. And, in fact, CAFO
21 operations are designed to promote the spread of
22 disease through animals kept in confinement, the very
23 name of the process itself, whereas animals from the
24 farmers -- because I also source my food, my produce,
25 my meat, my eggs, my dairy proudly from small farmers

1 who are within a fairly short radius of where I live,
2 and I know how that food was raised. I know how
3 those animals were raised. That animal -- that cow,
4 when it was slaughtered, was not commingled with the
5 meat of hundreds, perhaps thousands of other animals
6 in some large vat which promotes the spread of
7 disease.
8 Unfortunately, NAIS won't address any of
9 that because its program ends after the
10 slaughterhouse. It does not address the issue of
11 food-processing. It does not address the issue of
12 what happens to that meat once it is slaughtered, and
13 it doesn't ensure health. It only ensures the
14 potential traceability of disease with a very
15 difficult way of actually tracing it back so that the
16 animal -- the individual animal can be found.
17 Oddly enough, the small farmers that I
18 know who have maybe 20 head of cattle, who have maybe
19 100 chickens will be required to label and tag and
20 record the movements of every individual animal,
21 whereas CAFO operations will be able to register an
22 entire herd as one animal. This makes no sense. The
23 biggest companies, the biggest operations with the
24 most personnel and the most possibility for complying
25 with these regulations are the one that have the

1 least burden with the regulation.
2 The farmers that I know -- and my
3 grandparents were farmers -- work hard. They have
4 not enough time in the day to get done with what they
5 do. They are up before dawn. If they've got dairy
6 cattle, they're milking. If they've got chickens,
7 they're feeding. If they've got goats, they're
8 milking them, they're feeding them, they're doing
9 whatever they need do to process and ensure that
10 they've got healthy animals and clean food. They
11 don't have time to go and register every time the vet
12 comes to visit, every time their animal goes to the
13 third-generation poultry processor that slaughters
14 them to bring them to the farmers market, they're
15 slaughtered the night before. They're brought the
16 next day. They're not even frozen.
17 I'm interested in animal health. I'm
18 interested in consumer health. I'm interested in the
19 safety of our food supply. This doesn't address it.
20 There are maybe a million ways to address it. If you
21 want to do NAIS only for factory farms and make sure
22 that they tag every animal, great, but this is not a
23 solution for the thousands of small farmers,
24 homesteaders, and people with backyard chickens
25 across this country. This isn't going to do a darn

1 thing to ensure the safety of that food. I don't
2 want any part of it. And thank you for listening.
3 MR. BRANDT: Hello. My name is Eric
4 Brandt of Brandt Beef. We're a
5 family-owned-and-operated ranching company here in
6 Southern California. Our family raises and harvests
7 natural hormone- and antibiotic-free beef. We sell
8 our product to high-end boutique markets and upscale
9 restaurants throughout United States. Recently, we
10 have been able to export our product to Japan,
11 successfully sending our first shipment last week.
12 Over the past ten years, we have invested
13 heavily into tracking our beef, not only for tracking
14 purposes to ensure that the animals are antibiotic-
15 and hormone-free but for the safety and the health of
16 the animals. We track their health records. We
17 track everything that goes into the animals from the
18 time the animals are born all the way to the time
19 they get to the consumer's door.
20 The tracking system we chose is a system
21 called Global Track. It utilizes RFID, geospatial
22 technology, and a myriad of other technologies that
23 allows us to do this and track our beef throughout
24 the supply chain from the date, location, birth of
25 the animal, feeding and harvesting process and, like

1 I said, to the 35 to 42 different customers that we
2 sell to across the United States, including the
3 farmers markets that my sister sells our product at.
4 It is truly a remarkable and
5 state-of-the-art system that can track both from the
6 live end forward and from the boxed-beef end
7 backwards. We have invested in this elaborate system
8 to protect not only ourselves but our customers and,
9 most importantly, the consumer that depends on our
10 product. Our concern lies in the fact that we have
11 chosen to protect ourselves; however, there are many
12 that have chosen not to.
13 We've been proactive in creating this
14 system; however, in another crisis situation, we have
15 no protection because the whole market would be shut
16 down. I feel that the government should provide
17 protection for companies such as ourselves that have
18 chosen to be proactive in creating a tracking system
19 that provides us protection for not only ourselves
20 and our customers, most importantly, the consumer and
21 the reputation of the United States' meat supply.
22 Markets should remain open in these events for those
23 of us that have a proven and reliable system to track
24 our beef and our beef products. Thank you.
25 MR. AHART: Good morning. My name is

1 Greg Ahart, and I'm the national director of producer
2 relations for Superior Farms, which is the nation's
3 largest land-harvesting and processing company. Our
4 concerns tied to this are for the Western United
5 States and the sheep producers that raise lambs in
6 the western U.S., what the premise definition is
7 going to end up being.
8 Due to the migratory pattern of sheep
9 grazing in California, Arizona, Oregon, Nevada,
10 et cetera, there's a lot of crop residue that's
11 utilized, a lot of alfalfa residual, dependent upon
12 where feed resources are available throughout the
13 time of the year. We're also seeing an increase of
14 sheep and goats being utilized for targeted grazing
15 and vegetative management in cities and
16 municipalities. Vineyards are using them between the
17 rows of grapevines in order to keep vegetation down
18 and to prevent mowing or pesticide usage, which I
19 think we would all agree is good for agriculture.
20 But we're concerned about how the premise
21 ID is going to be defined for the producers to be
22 able to comply with it if they are constantly moving
23 the animals utilizing available feed residuals.
24 By the documentation that's in the
25 packet, it indicates that sheep are 90 percent ID'd

1 already based on Scrapie program. We would like to
2 see the National Animal ID program tied in to the
3 Scrapie program, where we already have a current
4 workable program that exists between producer's state
5 and federal entities that is providing that much
6 identification for the livestock already for the
7 sheep industry.
8 Another concern that we have are that the
9 sheep cost estimates are incomplete. They are based
10 on incomplete data and/or quite a few assumptions.
11 When you look at the weight of sheep versus hogs or
12 cattle, we're dealing with the lightest weight of the
13 livestock species that will be impacted on a mass
14 scale with it, and we are concerned about the cost
15 per pound of the ultimate product and the technology
16 costs that go back into there.
17 The migratory patterns of the sheep don't
18 necessarily have them going through a single chute
19 for electronic reading to be viable in the current
20 scenario. We need to be able to load them and unload
21 them on trailers. Sometimes they are grazed and
22 moved by walking from various grazing locations. So
23 there are some concerns in terms of making a workable
24 solution for the sheep producers in the Western U.S.
25 that utilize migration and crop residuals as much as

1 they do. Thank you.
2 MR. NEWMAN: My name is Robert Carver
3 Newman II. I'm a small pork producer in Riverside
4 County and have been for a few years. I grew up in
5 agriculture on a small farm in San Diego County. I
6 was involved in 4H for many years and FFA for a good
7 period of time. I worked in the fields. I identify
8 with the agriculture workers in the field.
9 I also was involved in dairy for many
10 years while in college, which I spent many years in
11 college getting advanced education because I realized
12 that agriculture is very difficult and subject to
13 whims of environment and governmental, in quotes,
14 "help." I got a doctorate in research psychology
15 because that interested me greatly, but I did go
16 through life science and physical science, got a
17 graduate degree in zoology and organic chemistry.
18 And with respect to this issue, I'm now
19 66 years of age, and I realize the government cannot
20 be trusted. That concerns me greatly. It's very
21 sad. I did not grow up thinking that way, but I have
22 come to realize that once something gets imposed, it
23 stays in place and it's self-perpetuating, and that
24 concerns me for all of us, including the consumer.
25 I think the "downer" cow issue is an

1 excellent illustration. As you know, that occurred
2 very close to here. We have to deal with two issues.
3 We have to deal with the greed factor of human
4 beings. We also have to deal with the fact that once
5 a decision is made with respect to "downer" cows,
6 that then gets imposed locally or nationally. That's
7 been imposed nationally.
8 When the "downer" cow issue arose, I
9 realized that there are healthy cows who are injured
10 who can't walk across that kill -- walk to the kill
11 floor. They are perfectly healthy. I am sure they
12 are now going to be sold on the farm, and the routes
13 of sale and consumption will be established in that
14 way, and actually I am in favor of that. Sick
15 cows -- I am not in favor of sick cows that will
16 contaminate the food source and the people. I am not
17 in favor of them getting into the food chain.
18 But the decision was made, as you
19 realize. No more "downer" cows. Who suffers? The
20 consumer suffers, the dairyman suffers, because a lot
21 of it, as you know, of those cows are dairy cattle.
22 Few of them are hogs.
23 Mine was a small operation. We sold
24 basically all of the hogs on the farm except for
25 senior sows, and most of them I donated to orphanages

1 in Mexico. My heart is very close to the Christian
2 organizations that support those activities in
3 Mexico. And in that regard, I'm actively involved in
4 "más de quince millones de Biblias para México" to
5 get the gospel out to people who need hope.
6 Now, since we have to deal with greed
7 factor -- thank you. And that concludes my
8 presentation. Thank you. God bless.
9 MODERATOR: Thank you, sir. And there
10 will be an opportunity for you to expound on those
11 thoughts in the breakout session -- to elaborate.
12 Yes. Better choice of words.
13 And thank you all of our speakers. And
14 just let me mention if you're comfortable, stay up
15 here. If you're not comfortable staying up after
16 you've talked, you're welcome to go back to your
17 seat.
18 So the next ticket, 089. 089.
19 And 097. 097.
20 And 093.
21 094.
22 And 099.
23 Thank you. And whenever you're ready,
24 ma'am.
25 MS. SNEDDEN: Good morning. My name is

1 Susie Snedden. I'm a fifth-generation cattle
2 producer here in California, and I'd like to share
3 with you that I believe if NAIS is implemented, this
4 will change the function of USDA, will put it on the
5 same level as the IRS. It will become a penalty and
6 fee-levying structure that requires an enforcement
7 arm, and mandatory NAIS will have a destructive
8 impact on the U.S. economy and particularly us -- we
9 livestock producers.
10 The system is alleged to be for animal
11 disease traceback, but instead will make the
12 livestock producers' ordinary management marketing
13 activities considered criminal behavior. The State
14 of Wisconsin has implemented a mandatory animal ID
15 system, and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture
16 sent a letter to livestock producers on March 3rd of
17 this year warning them that if they fail to renew
18 their premises registration with the State, they will
19 no longer be permitted to keep any of the covered
20 livestock at their location. Producers are given
21 five days to respond. The letter threatened
22 producers with legal actions and fines of up to
23 $5,000.
24 If this authoritarian approach can happen
25 at the state level, what are we to expect to happen

1 at the national if the mandatory system is
2 implemented? I would recommend that animal disease
3 traceback remain dealt with at as local a level as
4 possible and then have it be a voluntary system where
5 the responsibility is conducted by the State, and the
6 national government can coordinate with the State,
7 but that the databases be kept at the most local
8 level as possible. Thank you.
9 MR. VELEZ: Good morning. My name is
10 Victor Velez, and I'm here today on behalf of
11 California Department of Food and Agriculture, CDFA,
12 for those of you that know the acronym. CDFA is the
13 office -- the office of the State veterinarian that
14 has been responsible for managing the statewide
15 animal health programs dating back to 1899, so it's
16 been around for a long time. It has seen many
17 changes. CDFA commenced the United States Department
18 of Agriculture, or USDA, in its effort to enhance
19 national animal health programs by developing the
20 standards for premises and animal identification and
21 animal movement-reporting programs.
22 Inadequate animal identification and
23 tracing records often compromise the ability to
24 quickly and efficiently respond to animal-health
25 incidents. This was illustrated recently in the

1 bovine tuberculosis investigation in California's
2 Central Valley. We are aware of the difficulties in
3 bringing together individuals, organizations, and
4 agencies to dialogue on the complex issues such as
5 animal traceability; however, the objective to
6 enhance the traceability of animals is critical for
7 federal and state animal-health officials to
8 effectively respond to disease outbreaks and to
9 manage existing regulatory programs.
10 We believe a successful animal
11 traceability system has to start with obtainable
12 goals in order to receive the cooperation of the
13 numerous entities' involvement in livestock
14 production. The strong participation of all those
15 involved is critical to a successful program;
16 therefore, we recommend that the USDA develop
17 national guidelines and regulations that can be
18 reasonably followed by producers and enforced by
19 federal and state agencies.
20 The CDFA supports a system that
21 transitions NAIS standards to existing animal health
22 programs, such as brucellosis and tuberculosis, and
23 focuses on the identification of premises that are
24 highly at risk to become affected or exposed to
25 diseases or conditions of concern. High-risk

1 premises are those with heavy commingling or those
2 who receive an animal from high-risk areas. Animal
3 identification and animal-movement reporting should
4 follow similar development and should include animals
5 moving through international and interstate borders.
6 Once the infrastructure, technology, and
7 processes are implemented into livestock commerce,
8 additional premises and animals could be included in
9 the program only if there is a need for it. Animals
10 that never enter commerce present minor risk of
11 disease transmission and should not be the focus of
12 the program.
13 We also encourage the USDA to leverage
14 existing animal identification and movement
15 information such as that gathered by the Scrapie and
16 brand-inspection programs. The sheep and goat sector
17 have reached a high level of participation through
18 the national Scrapie identification program and
19 therefore recommend to continue using the current
20 system, and we support that.
21 Within the Western United States,
22 valuable personnel and resources exist to support
23 animal disease traceability through the
24 brand-inspection programs. These 15 states inspect
25 30 million head of cattle annually, providing added

1 benefit to state animal-health officials through a
2 variety of information sources. Supporting a uniform
3 and automated collection of this information will
4 supplement animal health official records. Finally,
5 we endorse USDA efforts to maintain the information
6 private and available only to state and federal
7 animal-health officials. Thank you.
8 MR. KUNEY: Now I'll be short and let
9 Victor have the rest of my time.
10 My name is Doug Kuney. I am a
11 poultry-farm advisor for the University of
12 California, Cooperative Extension. I work with the
13 poultry industry statewide.
14 I think this is a very, very important
15 program for us to have. It's going to help us
16 protect our industries in the state for interstate
17 trade and international trade. Currently right now
18 it's voluntary, but I believe that if we don't get
19 our industries to buy into the construction of this
20 program, we will have something forced upon us that
21 won't be voluntary anymore, and it will be mandatory.
22 So I think the good thing about this
23 program right now is that we all have input into it
24 and we can help form the program. I think it's very
25 important from both an animal-health standpoint and

1 also a public health and food safety standpoint.
2 So my only concern is: What's it going
3 to cost? How much is it going to cost my poultry
4 industry -- industries: Turkey, broilers, egg-laying
5 hens? How much is this going to cost, who is going
6 to pay for it, and how is it going to be determined.
7 Thank you.
8 MR. EDLUND: First off, I want to thank
9 Secretary Vilsack and the USDA officials for
10 arranging this listening session and giving us an
11 opportunity to speak on National Animal ID.
12 My name is Dennis Edlund. I'm here to
13 represent the Holstein Association, and we are a
14 member organization of dairy farmers from across the
15 country. We total about 30,000 members. And as an
16 organization, we support National Animal ID and we
17 feel it's a top priority to move it from a voluntary
18 to a mandatory system.
19 Several issues here we'd like to talk
20 about or mention, is that from an organizational
21 standpoint, we don't believe cost is a problem here.
22 Most of our members already tag their animals using
23 several tags, so an additional RFID tag is not a
24 cost-probative process. In fact, out here --
25 throughout the United States, but especially out here

1 in the West, a number of our members have already
2 incorporated RFID into their management systems.
3 From one part of the state, Ferndale, a
4 100-cow dairy, down to the other part of the state
5 where we might find a 4,000-cow dairy, all of them
6 are family farmers. They're all family operations.
7 And if you can incorporate RFID into your records
8 system, I can tell you that that wife or that
9 daughter that's doing the recordkeeping, it becomes a
10 lot more efficient to use RFID in that system.
11 They'll tell you it saves them time, and for a small
12 business owner, it does provide a lot of benefits.
13 And those members who do not incorporate it, it's
14 still -- then the additional equipment is not a
15 problem and the cost of tags are already involved in
16 your operations.
17 We also think that from a confidentiality
18 point, it's not an issue. Our members are already
19 well-regulated. They have mail permits. They have
20 air-quality permits. Everybody already knows where
21 their premise are, their location, and so from a
22 premise ID, that's not an issue. And then from as
23 far as the animal ID part, we believe the current
24 plan using private databases already protects the
25 confidentiality of records.

1 And then our members are really mostly
2 concerned from a confidence -- consumer confidence
3 point of view. They produce a product that they are
4 very proud of. And we already saw in the issues of
5 lettuce and peanuts, if the consumer has an issue,
6 they lose confidence, and if we cannot contain the
7 location of a problem, they just quit buying the
8 product. And so our members are very concerned that
9 we need a strong, vigorous national ID system to
10 protect them and to ensure confidence of the
11 consumer.
12 So I'll close by saying that, again, we
13 think that as an organization, we need to move to a
14 mandatory system and to provide the very best
15 competitive nature of our industries. Thank you.
16 MS. HEINRICHS: Good morning. I am
17 Christine Heinrichs. I am the historian for the
18 Society for the Preservation of Poultry Antiquities
19 and the author of two books about raising chickens
20 and other poultry in small-flocks traditional breeds.
21 I am grateful for the opportunity that
22 Secretary Vilsack has given us today. This is
23 something that I think has really had an impact on
24 decision-making regarding mandatory NAIS. The system
25 has proven thus far technically unworkable. It's too

1 expensive. The decisions on how this data will be
2 kept, in what databases and where remains
3 undetermined and not yet worked out, and practically,
4 as the USDA representatives have heard during these
5 listening sessions, it's unworkable because farmers
6 simply aren't going to sign up.
7 The USDA's report on the benefit cost
8 analysis of NAIS doesn't even mention the concerns of
9 small-poultry-flock owners. It deals only with the
10 commercial producers that use an all-in/all-out
11 method, giving a cost of about 1 cent per bird.
12 That's just unrealistic for small-flock owners.
13 That's not how it's going to play out for them.
14 As far as the goals of protecting
15 livestock markets and keeping the markets open to a
16 reputation of U.S. food as the highest quality in the
17 world, that's better addressed by addressing in a
18 proactive way the actual issues of animal health
19 rather than after the fact trying to trace what has
20 happened that's gone wrong.
21 If there were any possible way of
22 determining a better way to raise highly pathogenic
23 organisms than a concentrated animal-feeding
24 operation, I can't think what it is. The subclinical
25 doses of antibiotics are just breeding superbugs that

1 we are then trying to cope with after the fact. NAIS
2 does not address that issue.
3 The USDA has vacillated between mandatory
4 and voluntary terminology. The idea that a program
5 can be voluntary while requiring 100 percent
6 participation is something only the government could
7 understand. This is not realistic. Small-flock
8 owners are very angry, and it's damaged the
9 credibility of the USDA with those small-flock owners
10 whose cooperation truly is necessary to really
11 address the issues of animal health, which there are
12 issues. But we do have, especially with poultry,
13 programs such as NPIP that are already very
14 effective. They are applied at commingling occasions
15 such as county fairs or live-poultry markets. Those
16 systems are already working. To impose a further
17 system on small-poultry people is not workable.
18 As Wendell Berry, who's testified at one
19 of these meetings recently in Kentucky said, the NAIS
20 is supposed to solve a problem caused by the
21 agriculture industrialists themselves who now intend
22 to use that problem as a pretext to further
23 marginalize and limit the possibilities of
24 small-scale agriculture. He named Henry David
25 Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr.,

1 as honorable examples of the tradition of nonviolent
2 noncompliance, and he said he would absolutely not
3 comply with NAIS. As an older person, he said he had
4 little to lose by going to jail for the sake of
5 younger generations whose lives and livelihoods would
6 be threatened or eliminated by such opposition and
7 who still have much to lose. Thank you.
8 MODERATOR: Thank you.
9 And our next speakers: 098. 090. 091.
10 092.
11 Okay. So we'll have these three
12 speakers, and then I'll open the floor to anyone else
13 that would like to speak and has reconsidered since
14 they first registered.
15 MR. DOMENIGONI: Good morning. Andy
16 Domenigoni, a family-owned farm and ranch since the
17 1870s.
18 Several questions about the ID program.
19 One is the cost that you've already heard about and
20 these family farms. ID'ing our calves in our Tulare
21 County ranch -- we have a ranch up there that we
22 gather only twice a year with calves, so we don't
23 have the luxury of being able to ID a newborn calf
24 that we may never see for ten days or so in the field
25 or in the brush or in the trees. So how do we ID

1 those calves when we only gather in the spring and
2 fall? And so -- do we lump them together? How do we
3 ID those? It's very concerning.
4 In our ranch in Riverside County, it's a
5 little easier because our pastures are more confined
6 and we can move them to corrals, or we have the
7 luxury to catch them out of the back of the pickup
8 when they're newborns. How do we track stuff that we
9 sell at the ranch? Where does that data go? How do
10 we do that?
11 I know we have premise IDs and tagging,
12 and so where does the data go? There was a question
13 about who houses the data. Where is it housed so
14 it's centrally located?
15 If we move cattle only once or twice a
16 year, it is our only income in that, and our cattle
17 go to market, and then our ID number is moved again
18 to a buyer, that buyer sells our cattle somewhere
19 else, how do we know that those numbers are being
20 tracked properly?
21 And if something happens to our cattle
22 somewhere after they leave our premises and doesn't
23 get tracked correctly, then it comes back to our
24 herd, and we get quarantined for something that we
25 didn't do. How are we tracking all of that? How are

1 we assured that is done correctly and properly?
2 I'm not against ID'ing. I just think
3 that we need to have more answers to a lot of these
4 problems that we have today out there. In our family
5 ranch, you know, we sell at home. We sell
6 commercially.
7 So the cost is concerning to all of us.
8 The data, where it's housed is big problem right now.
9 Recordkeeping, you know, what format are we using
10 that is consistent to everybody to track? I know
11 there needs to be some kind of competition for
12 tagging and computers and things like that that we
13 can put in our own files and adapt our own programs.
14 I'm looking forward to -- well, hopefully something
15 gets generated out of this we can all use in a proper
16 manner. Thank you.
17 MR. SNEDDEN: My name is Richard Snedden.
18 I'm a cattle rancher from Maricopa, California, and
19 today I'm representing the United States Cattleman's
20 Association, and I'll refer to them as USCA. USCA is
21 a national cattleman's producer organization
22 representing cow-calf, stocker and feeder members.
23 The USCA encourages the USDA to develop a
24 voluntary program that standardizes and harmonizes
25 existing programs such as brand inspection, health

1 certificate, brucellosis and tuberculosis tags as the
2 USDA's health tracking traceback system.
3 Disease control begins at the U.S.
4 border. The U.S. government and agencies responsible
5 for the disease control must work to strengthen
6 import standards, not reduce them. Premise
7 registration and potential negative impacts on
8 livestock producers' right to privacy and private
9 property rights are of grave concerns to USCA;
10 therefore, USCA supports the utilization of phone
11 numbers and mailing addresses that relate to the
12 animal owner and not to the animal owner's leased or
13 real property.
14 A recently released National Animal ID
15 System cost-benefit analysis is indisputable evidence
16 of the burden NAIS places on the cattle industry.
17 The analysis shows that the cattle industry bears the
18 brunt of the $192 million cost and will most
19 certainly cause beef to be less competitive in the
20 protein competition area, and it could jeopardize the
21 future livelihood of many cattle producers.
22 Two questions are raised by newspaper
23 accounts of the cost-benefit study. Why is NAIS
24 touted as a marketing system when QSA and PV and
25 other systems are used to get our cattle into the

1 world market?
2 Another question: Is the projected
3 per-head cost to producers being grossly understated?
4 UC extension service report of June 2008 projects the
5 cost of $13 per head, per year.
6 Some members of Congress see NAIS as a
7 food-safety mechanism. USCA urges USDA to clarify to
8 Congress at future hearings that NAIS was developed
9 solely as a disease -- animal-disease-mitigation
10 program.
11 Rather than subjecting the livestock
12 industry to the most burdensome regulations in the
13 history of the U.S., we ask that the USDA continue
14 NAIS only -- and strictly only -- as a voluntary
15 program, work to harmonize existing programs in order
16 to utilize them and traceback programs, and utilize
17 the livestock owners' phone numbers and addresses
18 rather than premise ID. Thank you.
19 MS. HAZLETT: Good morning. My name is
20 Myra Hazlett. It looks like I'm the only dairy-goat
21 breeder here. There are, however -- and I have
22 spoken to more than 50 different breeders over the
23 past many months. This is a big thing to us.
24 We are absolutely opposed to this program
25 being implemented. It will put most of us out of

1 business. We know what the costs are going to be to
2 us, and we can't afford it.
3 What do we do with the animals that are
4 born, the buck kids that we have, that we have to
5 sell off? We only sell the top of our -- as do you
6 cattle breeders, we only sell the top of our buck
7 kids to breeders. The rest of them have to go to
8 meat. If you think I'm going to ask a meat buyer to
9 give me his driver's license and ask him where he
10 lives when he walks off the property with a
11 ten-day-old kid, it's not going to happen.
12 I went through the government-imposed --
13 the bird flu a few years back, and I can tell you
14 that the first three times the white coat showed up
15 at my gate, I told them to go get a warrant. They
16 weren't going to go take my birds. My flock was
17 healthy. I demanded testing, which we were told we
18 could get. It never happened. They came back with a
19 warrant. They killed my entire flock of birds. I've
20 never recouped the losses.
21 If you think I'm going to let somebody
22 come in and tell me I've got to tag my dairy goats
23 that I take to all of the state shows -- part of my
24 income comes from those goats being shown. I'm not
25 going to tag their ears. We ID them at birth with

1 tattoos. We belong to the Scrapie program. It's a
2 wonderful program. Why are we trying to add to it?
3 It protects us. It protects our animals. They are
4 monitored.
5 We have sick animals, the vet comes out.
6 We do -- because of the expenses, we do most of -- as
7 do the cattle breeders, we do most of our own vet
8 work; however, if we get something that we don't know
9 what it is, the vet comes in. If it's something he
10 doesn't know, the animal goes to the lab.
11 If this program wants to do something,
12 the government wants to do something, start
13 subsidizing the labs that are being closed because
14 they don't have enough money to perform what they
15 need to do. Our cost -- what used to be $60 for a
16 necropsy is now $100. Do you know what a hundred
17 dollars is to a goat breeder to have a 150-pound goat
18 necropsied so that we can protect our community, the
19 people that come to us for milk or to buy cheese or
20 whatever it is that we have?
21 We do not have the same outlets as the
22 big breeders have. We don't have the same outlets as
23 the cattle breeders have, but we still make a living
24 at what we do, and we want to be able to maintain
25 that. I probably have the largest herd in Southern

1 California; however, if this is implemented, I won't
2 have a herd. They will go out the door. I, for one,
3 and 30 or 40 of the other people that are local --
4 and there's a lot of local goat breeders -- will be
5 in the same boat. They will sell their herds, and
6 that will be the end of it.
7 So if you want to implement something,
8 you already have programs in place. Implement wages
9 enough to make those programs work. Don't put into
10 place a program that is destined to kill off all the
11 small farmers, and that's what it's going to do.
12 You're going to destroy what we've been raising our
13 families to do.
14 My granddaughters -- I'm here today
15 because my granddaughter's home milking and doing the
16 chores and bottling the babies, and my vet's in
17 Hawaii. He's on his honeymoon. But we have other
18 vets that we can use. So we use all of the resources
19 to maintain our herds and -- I'm up. I have more to
20 say. I'll be back.
21 MODERATOR: Is there anyone else that
22 when you first came in, you weren't sure if you
23 wanted to talk and maybe you'd like to do so now?
24 Please come on up, if that's the case.
25 Okay. By my clock we're at a quarter

1 after the hour. What I'm going to ask us to do is
2 take a 15-minute break and come back at 10:30, and
3 we'll let you know how the next part of this session
4 will work, because I think we'll do our breakouts
5 this morning and just give us a chance to regroup and
6 see what size groups we want to have. We may not go
7 the three groups, is what I'm trying to say, with
8 this number of people. So come back in about
9 15 minutes, and thank you so much.
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1 STATE OF CALIFORNIA)
) Ss.
2 COUNTY OF ORANGE)
3
4 I, J'ana Siegers, Certified Shorthand Reporter
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6 hereby certify:
7 I am the person who stenographically recorded the
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9 The foregoing transcript is a true record of said
10 proceedings.
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