



NEWS RELEASE

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SECRETARY VILSACK ANNOUNCES NATIONAL ANIMAL IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM LISTENING SESSION LOCATIONS

WASHINGTON, April 30, 2009--Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack today announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) will hold a series of listening sessions on the National Animal Identification System (NAIS). The meetings will take place next month in Alabama, Colorado, Connecticut, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Washington state.

“USDA needs to hear directly from our stakeholders as we work together to create an animal disease traceability program we can all support,” said Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack. “I encourage individuals and organizations to voice their concerns, ideas and potential solutions about animal identification, by either attending these listening sessions or submitting comments online.”

APHIS seeks to gather not only producer comments and concerns, but also potential or feasible solutions to create a program producers can feel comfortable supporting. The listening sessions will include information about the current program, as well as an opportunity to give public testimony or ask program-related questions. Discussion sessions related to NAIS' cost, impact on small farmers, privacy and confidentiality, liability premises registration, animal identification and animal tracing will allow producers to provide their input on ways to make the program into something they can support.

The public meetings will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. local time, with registration one hour prior to each meeting. The meetings will be held in the following locations:

Thursday, May 14: Harrisburg, Pa.
Monday, May 18: Pasco, Wash.
Wednesday, May 20: Austin, Texas
Thursday, May 21: Birmingham, Ala.
Friday, May 22: Louisville, Ky.
Wednesday, May 27: Storrs, Conn.
Monday, June 1: Greeley, Colo.

Additional information on the meetings can be found at: www.usda.gov/nais/feedback.shtml

In 2004, APHIS began implementing NAIS, an animal traceability system that would enable producers and animal health officials to respond quickly and effectively to animal disease events in the United States.

Notice of this action is scheduled for publication in the May 1 *Federal Register*.

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Note to Reporters: USDA news releases, program announcements and media advisories are available on the Internet. Go to the APHIS news release page at <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom>. Also, anyone with an e-mail address can sign up to receive APHIS press releases automatically. Send an e-mail message to lyris@mdrdlyriss10.aphis.usda.gov and leave the subject blank. In the message, type `subscribe press_releases`.