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NDHIA Position Statement Supports National Premises and Animal Identification System to Protect Health of US Dairy and Livestock Herds

The National Dairy Herd Improvement Association (NDHIA) and its nearly 28,000 producers, supports the recent efforts of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to deal with the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) incident in the United States. This incident has raised the awareness of animal health risks that face US dairy and livestock producers. NDHIA has previously supported the implementation or enhancement of existing premises and animal identification as a preventative measure for foreign animal disease outbreaks and surveillance.

During its 99 year history, NDHIA has been involved in premises and animal identification in the role of providing dairy records. NDHIA, partnering with other dairy industry cooperators, advocates the enhancement of national premises and animal identification programs. This is key to providing animal health officials with the means of tracing livestock to ensure the high animal health standards of the U.S. dairy and livestock herds. Currently 47% or over 4.2 million of the producing U.S. dairy cattle population is identified in the DHIA system. This long standing support and participation has been carried out and includes the DHIA system's field program for identification of dairy animals and providing management and genetic records for the dairy industry.

NDHIA supports a mandatory, comprehensive premises and animal ID program for livestock of all ages. Secretary Veneman's endorsement on December 30, 2003 of this concept provides the vision and leadership to make an identification program an effective tool for monitoring the health of the 9.1 million dairy cattle in the U.S. NDHIA on behalf of its 28,000 dairy producers is participating in a leadership role by cooperating to enhance and implement the US Animal Identification Plan (US AIP). The DHIA system will continue its current involvement in the everyday operation of this objective and work to ensure that the US Animal Identification Plan (US AIP) is supported by NDHIA.

Greg Marrs, NDHIA identification coordinator, Fort Lupton, Colorado, states that, "Dairy producer input in forming the guidelines and providing direction to the US AIP is critical to ensure universal adoption and effective operation of the premises and animal identification plans which will maintain the high standards of animal health in the U.S."

"Ensuring animal health and consumer confidence with minimal impact on animal agriculture commerce should be the goal of government agencies, consumers and production agriculture," states Jay Mattison, NDHIA Administrator, Madison, Wisconsin.

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