

**Testimony presented at the
USDA Listening Session on the NAIS
In Appleton, WI
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for National DHIA**

Good afternoon. My name is Dr. Ken Olson. I am here today on behalf of the National Dairy Herd Improvement Association. I am the immediate past chairman of the board of the National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA), the organization who laid the ground work for the National Animal Identification System through the conduct over several years of conferences on animal ID that led to formation of the task force that developed the U.S. Animal Identification Plan. I have also had the opportunity to work with APHIS, as an industry representative, on several efforts in recent years that have a bearing on the current discussion including development of the emergency action plan for Bovine TB, development of the BSE Response Plan and serving as a part of the US team in the Tripartite Test Exercise on FMD with Mexico and Canada. I have been a part of the National Animal Health Emergency Management Steering Committee. A common thread, a common concern that was apparent in all of these activities was the realization that we do not have in place in this country an animal ID system that is adequate to deal effectively with an animal disease outbreak, be it a foreign animal disease or a reemerging disease.

I have also had the opportunity to be a part of APHIS teams in visits to several Mexican states to evaluate their animal health programs, primarily

focusing on bovine TB. We require Mexico to have in place an ID system with records that allow traceback to the herd of origin in order for them to export animals to the US. As a part of our visits we verify that the system works and that traceback can be and is done when disease is found. Canada also has a system that has been implemented and continued to be enhanced, so our neighbors do have systems in place. We need to move as rapidly as possible on the implementation of a system for our country that works. We are not likely to initially have the ultimate system, but we need to move forward with a system that will work, recognizing that it will continue to be enhanced as new technology is developed and needs are further refined.

National DHIA strongly supports the development and rapid implementation of a national animal ID system. The system is critical to the future of animal agriculture as we address emerging animal health issues. Having a system in place that will allow a complete traceback within 48 hours of finding a foreign animal disease helps protect our nation's animals and our producer's livelihood. Without a national animal ID system we are at significant risk.

I stated earlier that we need a system that works. We also want it to work with a minimum of disruption to existing operations. As you look to implement the National Animal Identification System, I strongly encourage you to make full use of a voluntary, producer led system that has been in place for nearly 100 years that already collects much of the information needed by the system. The Dairy Herd Improvement system has always relied on individual animal identification as well as herd or premise ID. The system currently maintains records on approximately 4.5 million dairy cows or about half of our national dairy herd. The program operates in every state

and has field staff that routinely visits producer members to collect and verify information. This information includes herd or premise information as well as individual animal information including ID, date of birth and movement in and out of the herd. This means that we have a system in place and ready to work with you to move the NAIS forward. In addition, the DHIA system has served as an ID tag distributor to dairy producers for many years. We are experienced in the area and ready to serve the system as an AIN manager and distributor. We encourage you to finalize the required standards so that we can begin to work in this area.

We recognize producer concerns over confidentiality of information. This is a valid concern; however, it has been our experience that we have been able to effectively share information with authorized users including USDA without putting producers and their information at risk. We are confident that this can be done through this system as well. One critical element that will enhance producer comfort and confidence in this area is providing a means for producer input in the governance of the program. To work effectively the system needs to be a true cooperative effort between state and federal animal health officials as well as industry. We urge you to assure that there is full representation of actual producers in the oversight and evaluation of the system as it is implemented and enhanced.

To summarize, the DHIA system provides an opportunity for the national ID system to partner with a voluntary producer led program, that is trusted by producers and industry, which has a long history of excellence in data collection and transfer. This partnership would minimize duplication of reporting by dairy producers and provide the NAIS with immediate access to

a system that can collect the added information that is needed as well as an organization with the experience needed to be an AIN manager and distributor. The system now focuses on dairy, but it can easily be made available to other species. Our organizations would welcome the opportunity work with producers of any livestock species in this effort. We also stand ready to be an active industry partner in the future governance of the program.

Thank you for the allowing me to share these thoughts on the implementation of NAIS with you. We look forward to having the DHIA system as a partner in this important effort to safeguard the health of the national herd.