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Despite NAIS concerns electronic identification use by cow-calf producers is increasing

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DESPITE NAIS CONCERNS ELECTRONIC IDENTIFICATION USE BY COW-CALF PRODUCERS IS INCREASING

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Introduction

The proposed U.S. National Animal Identification System has generated concerns among producers relative to implementation of the system. Many of these concerns stem from the USDA's Bovine Identification Working Group's recommendations to use electronic identification. The U.S. Animal Identification Plan Bovine Working Group has recommended radio frequency identification as the technology to individually identify cattle. Understanding and implementing an electronic identification system for cow-calf producers is believed to be one of the greatest challenges of implementing the National Animal Identification System.

Experimental Procedures

A panel of experts at Kansas State University completed content validity testing of the prepared survey instrument. Participants were selected in the spring of 2006 from a mailing list of cow-calf producers with more than 100 head of cows. *BEEF®* Magazine provided the mailing list and a random sample of 1,000 producers was selected. Three mailings were sent to each participant over a two-month time period. Non-respondents received an additional fourth mailing to further encourage response. Mailings included: 1) pre-notice letter, 2) survey packet and cover letter, 3) postcard thank you/reminder, and 4) replacement questionnaire with monetary incentive. Data were collected by Prism Business Media, Inc.,

and analyzed by both Prism Business Media, Inc. and Kansas State University.

Results and Discussion

A total effective mailing of 972 resulted in 522 completed surveys for an effective response rate of 53.7%. Producers from 41 states responded to the survey. 77.8% of respondents were over the age of 45 with an average herd size of 160 head.

Investigators wanted to determine the types of identification systems producers already had in place. While a large majority of producers (94.1%) reported using some type of animal identification system, less than 10% of producers utilized electronic ear tags.

Table 1: Which of the Following Animal Identification Systems Do You Currently Use?

	Number Reporting	Percent Reporting*
Visual ear tag	441	84.5%
Brand	293	56.1%
Tattoo	117	22.4%
Electronic ear tag	40	7.7%
Other	22	4.2%
None	25	4.8%
No answer	6	1.1%

*Percents may reflect multiple answers.

In 2005, 7.3% of respondents purchased electronic ear tags for identification purposes (Table 2). The number more than doubles, with 16.5% of producers planning to purchase electronic ear tags in 2006 (Table 3).

Table 2: In 2005, Did You Purchase Any Electronic Ear Tags for Identification Purposes?

Purchased in 2005	Number Reporting	Percent Reporting
Yes	38	7.3%
No	479	91.8%
No answer	5	1.0%

N = 522.

Table 3: Have You Purchased, or Do You Plan to Purchase Any Electronic Tags for Identification Purposes in 2006?

Plan to Purchase in 2006	Number Reporting	Percent Reporting
Yes	86	16.5%
No	410	78.5%
No answer	26	5.0%

N = 522.

A small number of producers (5.4%) reported current use of electronic identification and monitoring in their herds (Table 4).

Table 4: Do You Use Any Electronic Identification/monitoring On Your Cattle?

	Number Reporting	Percent Reporting
Yes	28	5.4%
No	487	93.3%
No answer	7	1.3%

N = 522.

Implications

This data provides us with a better understanding of how producers are preparing for the implementation of a national animal identification system. Based on these data, usage will likely double in 2006.