

The ABCs of ADT

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The federal animal disease traceability (ADT) rule, which took effect in March 2013, includes new requirements for documentation and record keeping for several classes of cattle shipped across state lines. Valerie Ragan, DVM, outlined the regulations, ADT challenges and the potential for electronic documentation to streamline the process during a webinar presented by GlobalVetLink (GVL) this week.

Ragan currently serves as director of the Center for Public and Corporate Veterinary Medicine at the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine. Formerly, she served as assistant deputy administrator for Veterinary Services within USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), so she is well familiar with the traceability issue.

Ragan notes that federal animal ID programs are not new, but in the United States historically have focused on eradication of specific diseases. As progress is made in controlling those diseases, the numbers of animals or herds identified declines. For example, in the 1950s, about 150,000 U.S. cattle herds were affected by brucellosis, requiring breeding animals to be vaccinated and identified with ear tags. Today the number of affected herds is near zero, meaning fewer animals with standardized identification and the need for more comprehensive traceability.

The ADT program, Ragan says, is intended to minimize disease impacts and protect export markets. In the event of a disease outbreak, it will help animal-health officials determine where diseased animals are and where they've been, helping ensure a rapid response. It also will reduce the number of owners or operations impacted by a disease investigation.

Ragan explains that three primary concepts of an epidemiological investigation are:

1. Learning where the disease came from.
2. Identifying management factors involved in the disease spread.
3. Learning where the disease went.

ADT, she says, can help with numbers 1 and 3 on that list. Proper identification and recording of movements can allow more accurate tracking of animals potentially exposed. Without effective traceability, many more herds that could have been exposed or received infected animals need to be tested, at greater expense and inconvenience to producers.

While the federal government set standards for the ADT rule, it is owned and administered by state and tribal animal health officials, and it largely makes use of existing systems such as the Interstate Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (ICVIs).

The rule became effective on March 11, 2013. By March 11, 2014, all official ear tags must bear the official program shield, and by March 11, 2015, all official tags applied must include that shield.

The program however, applies only to certain classes of cattle and only to animals destined for interstate shipment. All sexually intact cattle 18 months of age or older fall under the rule, as do

dairy-breed cattle of any age or sex, and all cattle transported to shows, exhibits or rodeos. Beef calves and feeder cattle less than 18 months of age are not covered by the rule. APHIS has stated its intention to address those classes of cattle in a separate, future rulemaking process.

Covered classes of cattle moving across state lines need an ICVI. Some other documents can work in place of the ICVI if the shipping and receiving states have agreed upon the documents. Likewise, in addition to official ear tags, brands and brand-inspection certificates can serve as official ID if the shipping and receiving states have such an agreement. The [ADT General Standards document](#) contains detailed information about ID devices and numbering systems. Ragan encourages veterinarians and producers to review the document and contact their state or tribal animal-health officials with questions specific to their location.

Minimizing ICVI headaches

Under the ADT rule, veterinarians need to submit the ICVI for qualified cattle to the state of origin within seven days of shipment. That state must then forward a copy of the ICVI to the receiving state within seven days. Veterinarians and livestock facilities must retain copies of the documents for five years.

As the use of these documents increases, paper ICVI forms create challenges for all involved, including legibility, accuracy, timeliness of submission, file storage and organization and especially, ability to quickly retrieve the appropriate records in case of a disease investigation.

Electronic systems such as [GlobalVetLink's HealthLink](#) electronic Certificate of Veterinary Inspection (eCVI) can help streamline the process. GVL's eCVI is accepted by animal health officials in all 50 states. The system saves information such as client names and addresses so the veterinarian does not need to enter them every time. It features drop-down menus with selections for data fields and ID numbers can be copied and pasted from an Excel spreadsheet for speed and accuracy. The system allows uploads of digital photos of animals or brands.

Once the user completes the eCVI, the system automatically forwards it to the appropriate office in the state of origin, and that state then forwards the eCVI to the receiving state. The records are secure, but easily searchable in the event of an investigation. The need for storing paper forms for five years is eliminated.

For more details on the ADT rule, view the [ADT General Standards document](#) from USDA/APHIS.