

# Holstein Association USA Taking Proactive Role In National Livestock Identification System

BRATTLEBORO, VT. - Will take an incident of "Mad Cow Disease" to force the U.S. livestock industry to create a system to identify animals and track their movement throughout the production chain? Not if Holstein Association USA has anything to say about it.

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The Holstein Association is taking a practice approach to develop an infrastructure that would prepare our country for any similar event and to prevent it from devastating the industry. National Farm Animal Identification and Records (F.A.I.R.), a model for a national identification system for dairy, will be one of the first steps in a comprehensive livestock ID system.

F.A.I.R. will design a unified system of animal identification to help ensure that public and private efforts to improve animal health/disease control, food safety, trade, and genetic advancement are successful. The model recently received funding support from USDA-

APHIS and will be coordinated by the Holstein Association. In early 1996, the Council on Dairy Cattle Breeding provided industry support for the consideration of such a model demonstration. The project will be tested in four states: New York, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and California.

The model is intended to unify animal identification programs and link animal recording systems to provide accurate, complete, and cost-effective information that meets needs of the various segments of the industry. The demonstration will provide for the design and testing of methods to track animals from farm to farm, farm to market, and market to slaughter.

Identification methods will include both RFID transponders and visible plastic ear tags. In addition to identification systems and methods, issues of electronic data flow, data base administration and accessibility will be established.

The National F.A.I.R. project is supported by APHIS's National Animal Health Programs. "The Holstein

Association's experience in animal identifications and long term efforts for improving the system in the United States makes them a natural for leading the efforts for this program," said Bill Ford, Staff Officer at USDA's National Animal Health Programs. "The vast support throughout the industry is a real catalyst for successful results."

"While the project is relatively small in comparison to projects in other countries, we are anxious to develop a model that will help us answer many questions that have been very difficult to get our hands around," said Neil Hammerschmidt, Coordinator for the National F.A.I.R. project. Hammerschmidt is the Executive Director, Dairy

Herd Services at the Holstein Association.

"The alignment we have established with APHIS is very significant as we develop one ID system that supports all segments of the industry," he added.

Joan Arnold, Deputy Administrator for Veterinary Services, USDA-APHIS, emphasized the importance of animal identification. "It is the basis for our success in controlling existing diseases and protecting against new diseases. We must devote time and effort to ID systems which support protection."

The F.A.I.R. project will incorporate the American ID numbering system, a unique "social security-type" number

which will be assigned and attached to each animal. Using sophisticated computer systems, a national database will be created to track the movement and progress of the animal throughout its entire life. USDA's new food safety regulations and the National F.A.I.R. system will give the U.S. the tools that it needs to enhance farm animal food quality and safety.

"This is a critical project for the entire livestock industry," Steve Kerr, CEO of Holstein Association USA said. "As USDA's successful eradication program for Brucellosis draws to a close, the void in animal identification in the United States will quickly become much more

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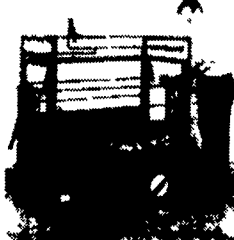
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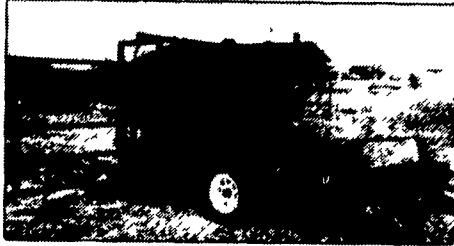
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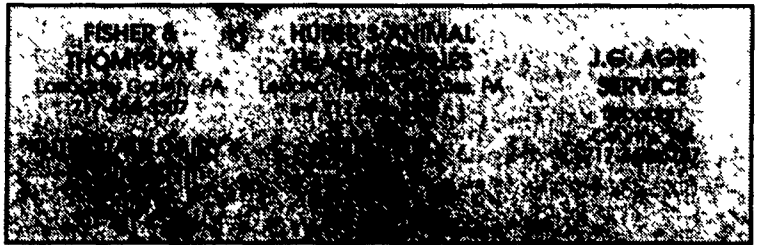
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