

NATIONAL CATTLE FEEDERS' ASSOCIATION

Comments on Proposed Changes to Part XV of the Health of Animals Regulations
(Identification and Traceability)



JUNE 16, 2023

#6, 11010 46th Street SE Calgary, Alberta T2C 1G4



GENERAL COMMENTS

National Cattle Feeders' Association (NCFA) represents Canadian cattle feeders on national issues and works collaboratively with other stakeholders to strengthen the Canadian beef industry. NCFA strongly supports the concept of a functional traceability system which enables our industry to respond efficiently and effectively to disease threats and natural disasters, and understands the intent of these proposed amendments to the traceability regulations is to support those outcomes. Given the economic impact that a foreign disease outbreak could have on our industry, NCFA values proactive approaches to managing outbreaks and mitigating impacts to livestock production and trade.

NCFA has concerns with some areas of the proposed regulations and has identified some flaws in the effective implementation of the requirements. While recognizing the potential benefits of increased reporting, there are logistical limitations and variations in production systems which need to be considered throughout these proposed regulations.

BACKGROUND

Canada needs our livestock traceability system to be supported and implemented at a level which will be realistically achievable in order to demonstrate merit in trade agreements. NCFA notes that a functional traceability system is only one factor related to establishing or maintaining international market access and even a "perfect" system will not guarantee international trade access. It is important to keep in mind the objective of effective traceability that is realistically achievable without burdening the industry to the point of a negative benefit.

OBJECTIVE

NCFA supports the objective of these proposed regulations.

DESCRIPTION

1. Adding goats and cervids.

NCFA supports this proposed change.

2. Modifications to existing traceability requirements



Movement Reporting – mandatory information:

NCFA recognizes the merit of recording the PIDs of departure and arrival sites as well as the date of arrival, and supports this regulation, provided that the departure site information is received with the animals.

NCFA asks for the removal of the proposed new regulatory requirement to record the arrival and departure time in hours and minutes, as this level of detail does not improve reportable disease traceback for cattle and is an unnecessary reporting burden on the beef cattle industry. There are no reportable diseases in cattle that can be traced back in hours and minutes, including FMD (foot and mouth disease). Traceback periods for infectious and contagious reportable diseases are based on days, because our ability to age clinical lesions is in days and there is variability in the prepatent and incubation period of infectious agents, which is based on a range of days.

NCFA asks that arrival reporting requirements of individual animals by each livestock trailer's license plate number be revised, to allow for the recording of groups of cattle to multiple license/conveyance numbers when, due to practical and logistical issues, cattle cannot be identified by individual trailer load. The on-arrival requirement to report individual RFID tag numbers by individual trailer license plate number or conveyance ID is not practical in some commercial feedlots or for all loads of cattle. Feedlot infrastructure is designed to manage large groups of cattle, and sometimes multiple truckloads of cattle must be commingled on arrival before they are processed into the feedlot, particularly when large volumes of cattle are arriving in one day and there are a limited number of receiving pens to house the cattle on arrival. In these situations, it is impossible to link incoming individual cattle to each trailer and report this information, therefore NCFA asks for allocations to identify groups of cattle with multiple trailers.

Export of cattle:

NCFA asks that the proposed regulation be amended to remove the export reporting requirement to report individual indicator tag numbers by license plate number. We recommend, instead, that similar to the request for reporting the arrival of animals at the feedlot, export cattle can be reported as groups associated with multiple trailer license/conveyance ID numbers. The proposed new requirement to read and report individual animal RFID tags by specific trailer license plate number is not practical for feedlots who are exporting large volumes of cattle at the same time on the same CFIA Veterinary Health Certificate.

Current CFIA and USDA regulatory requirements for CFIA Veterinary Health Certificates (HA2183) allow for up to eight truckloads on the same certificate, and cattle are often penned collectively as such. From an infectious disease control perspective, all truckloads on the same CFIA Veterinary Health Certificate, which leave the same feedlot and are transported direct to the same US slaughter plant in sealed trucks (sealed at the port of entry by USDA vets), are considered one cohort when dealing with the management of infectious and contagious reportable diseases and all truckloads



within the same cohort would need to be traced back in the case of a reportable disease.

As written, the new regulation would require feedlots shipping multiple truckloads on the same CFIA Veterinary Health Certificate to read each individual RFID ear tag as the cattle are being loaded onto each truck. This would require RFID panel readers to be installed at each feedlot on the loading docks and new software to collect this information because these cattle are housed in the same larger feeding pen until they are shipped direct to slaughter and individual scanning during loading would not be feasible. Large commercial feedlots that typically export most fed cattle to the USA do not have enough shipping pens to house individual truckloads after they create each CFIA Veterinary Health certificate (which can be done up to 30 days prior to shipment to the USA). This proposed new regulation would have a significant negative impact on these feedlots, requiring major facility changes, or as previously described, RFID panel readers on loading docks and new software, and more labor. Under outdoor conditions, the accuracy of reading CCIA/USDA EID tags is not 100% effective, which poses another issue. Thus, this proposed regulatory requirement does not improve traceability and would pose an undue burden on the feedlot industry.

Import of cattle:

NCF asks for the same allocation previously suggested related to associating large groups of animals to multiple license numbers/conveyance IDs due to the potential for cattle to be commingled prior to induction processing on arrival.

Responsibilities for livestock haulers (carriers):

NCF questions the requirement for livestock haulers to keep records of animals transported for two years after the transport date. Given that the information is relayed to the arrival site within twenty-four hours and the proposed amendments would require arrival reporting within seven days (including reporting the trailer license or conveyance ID), it seems redundant for the transporters to maintain records for two-years.

Passive-reading principle:

NCF supports the implementation of the passive reading principle.

Time to report:

NCF accepts the proposed requirement to report tag numbers of cattle within 7 days of arrival as a reasonable standard for feedlots, while recognizing that this may be challenging for producers which currently lack the infrastructure to facilitate efficient RFID tag scanning and reporting.

NCF accepts the proposed requirement to report on-site disposal of carcasses within 7 days.

Premise ID:

NCF supports the requirement for mandatory premises identification.



Loss of Approved Indicators:

NCFA accepts the requirement to report the ID of the old and new approved indicator and premises ID number but **requires a revision on the recording of license plate/conveyance ID, as previously explained.**

Modifications to requirements related to the use of animal indicators:

NCFA asks that feedlots continue to be recognized as approved tagging sites. While the regulations state that all animals are to be tagged prior to leaving their herd of origin, there are instances where, due to safety concerns or a lack of facilities, some beef producers are unable to meet this requirement. Some of these cattle go directly to feedlots and it would be beneficial to both the beef industry and the cattle if feedlots could continue tagging these cattle using CCIA ear tags from the original owner as part of their induction process.

The proposed regulatory change would mean these untagged cattle are now required to go through an assembly yard, even if the original owner is retaining ownership or the animals are being sold directly to a feedlot, presenting several animal care and biosecurity concerns. For example, some producers are a significant distance from their closest auction mart (up to several hours away) and this means an extensive trip to transport the cattle to the assembly site, whereas the feedlot that will feed their cattle that is much closer in proximity. Additionally, some auction marts may not be willing to provide this new service for cattle that are not being sold through their facility, meaning a producer may have to travel beyond their closest assembly yard to access tagging services. This additional handling and transportation increases the risk of cattle injury and stress, which also contributes to BRD (Bovine Respiratory Disease); thus, these regulatory changes reduce animal welfare.

Additional movement to assembly yards also reduces biosecurity. Assembly sites typically have thousands of cattle arriving and departing their premises each week and those movements are reported by group movement, not by individual animal CCIA tag. NCFA supports maintaining the ability for assembly yards to report group movements rather than individual movements, however, this proposed new regulation means that the only option for cattle being tagged is to move them through a group movement site rather than a site that reports individual movements, as feedlots do. This revised regulation reduces the level of traceability associated with these animals and is contradictory to the intent of these proposed new regulations. Through assembly yards, these cattle may be exposed to additional infectious bacteria and viruses which they will transmit to other cattle at their next location. The animal health and biosecurity risks and lower traceability associated with movement through a group assembly site makes this proposed regulation a concern to the beef industry and to the cattle.

Sale of tags:

NCFA requires clarification around the restriction of selling approved indicators (CCIA tags). While we understand the concern around this practice, we feel it could be done responsibly and still maintain full traceability. An example of what should be an exception would be custom feedlots



which may have animals which lose tags either prior to arrival or while on the premises. These operations function on a service-fee basis and would be expected to replace the missing indicators, however the regulations indicate that they are not permitted to use one of their own tags on animals which they do not own and then sell the tag to the owner, as standard billing practice would be. **NCFA requests the regulations allow the sale of tags provided that the transfer of ownership is relayed to the responsible administrator (CCIA).** Alternatively, we require clarification around what would be the expected course of action in a situation such as the example above.

3. Increased agility and efficiency in the Regulations

Approved Indicators:

NCFA supports inclusive wording which allows for the adoption of new technology for identification and traceability purposes.

REGULATORY DEVELOPMENT

National Cattle Feeders' Association appreciates being included in this consultive process. We acknowledge there is a wide array of stakeholders impacted by these changes and look forward to continued engagement towards industry-supported regulations which are achievable and impactful.

REGULATORY IMPACT ANALYSIS

NCFA questions the accuracy of the Cost-Benefit Analysis presented for the proposed amendments to the current regulations. There are indications of a one-to-one trade-off value from current regulations to new regulations, however the new regulations will involve significantly increased data collection and reporting beyond what is currently required. This translates to increased requirements for educating industry, training staff, updating software programs and overseeing collection of information – all of which increase the cost of these regulations to the industry. These expenses are expected to be absorbed by industry and the numbers reflected in the analysis are severely underestimated.

The beef industry does already report a significant number of animal movements, largely due to sophisticated technology implemented in the cattle feeding sector which involves scanning cattle individually once they arrive at a feedlot. Some animal management software programs are designed to upload animal identification data to the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) and report the movements of those animals within 24 hours of being scanned. This technology is not readily available or affordable to everyone, however, as economies of scale make it prohibitive to justify the investment for many beef producers.



If the entire industry is expected to take on an increased reporting burden, the true costs of implementation need to be accurately captured and the benefit of the increased regulations should outweigh the costs of implementation. The economic analysis indicates the beef sector will absorb 81% of the expected cost of implementing the new regulations, while only experiencing 37% of the benefit. We expect that this grossly imbalanced cost-benefit for the beef industry will be reflected in assistance from government through implementation support.

IMPLEMENTATION, COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT, AND SERVICE STANDARDS

As with any regulations, successful adoption will rely heavily on education and implementation support. There are many different production systems and varied levels of understanding regarding the current regulations, and these proposed regulations will add further complexity. The requirement to report all cattle on arrival will be business-as-usual for many feedlots; however, beef producers who operate without advanced technology will be burdened with additional labour and administrative requirements. Government programs offering support for the adoption of RFID scanning technology and software programs related to animal movement reporting would assist with the implementation of the proposed regulations, as would investment into industry-based solutions geared towards meeting the proposed regulations.

The level of enforcement required to achieve optimal compliance in the industry would be excessive and would only increase the cost of traceability and further offset the cost-benefit analysis. The diversity of the beef industry is complex, and programs offering incentives based on meeting regulatory requirements have had more success than attempted enforcement across the spectrum.

INTERPRETATION

175 (1): *If the operator of an assembly point has declared in a written application that the equipment and facilities at the site are adequate to enable the application of an approved indicator to a bison or bovine without endangering its safety or the safety of the personnel at the site, the responsible administrator shall approve the assembly point as an approved identification site by including the name and address of the assembly point on the list of approved identification sites published on their website.*

NCFA asks that feedlots be included as eligible to be recognized as identification sites, subject to the same standards outlined for assembly points in 175(1-4) and 180(1-2).

183.8: *Unless authorized in writing by a responsible administrator, no person shall sell or distribute an approved indicator or approved secondary indicator.*

NCFA would like clarification on how to obtain this approval and in what situations it would be approved. As mentioned previously regarding the situation with custom feedlots where people may pay someone else to feed their cattle for them, there may be instances when an RFID tag would need to be



replaced. Standard practice would include issuing a new tag, associating the new tag to the old one (if known) and relaying this information to the responsible administrator (CCIA/CLTS), and then billing the cost of the tag to the owner of the cattle, effectively “selling” it. In a situation like this, asking for written permission each time would be onerous and would not achieve any additional traceability outcomes.

184(1)(c-d): *required to report the date and time of departure/arrival of the conveyance;*

NCFA asks for the removal of the proposed new regulatory requirement to record the arrival and departure time in hours and minutes, as this level of detail does not improve reportable disease traceback for cattle and is an unnecessary reporting burden on the beef cattle industry. There are no reportable diseases in cattle that can be traced back in hours and minutes, including FMD (foot and mouth disease). NCFA does support reporting the date of arrival.

186(e): *required to report for export cattle the license plate number of the conveyance or, if there is no license plate, other information identifying the conveyance.*

NCFA asks that the proposed regulation be amended to remove the export reporting requirement to report individual indicator tag numbers by license plate number. We recommend that, similar to the request for reporting the arrival of animals at the feedlot, export cattle can be reported as groups associated with multiple trailer license/conveyance ID numbers. The proposed new requirement to read and report individual animal RFID tags by specific trailer license plate number is not practical for feedlots who are exporting large volumes of cattle at the same time on the same CFIA Veterinary Health Certificate, and it achieves no additional traceability outcomes.

Suggested amendment for 186(e): the license plate number(s) of the conveyance(s) associated to the animals or, if there is no license plate, other information identifying the conveyance(s).

187.1(e): *see comments for 186(e).*