

# **National Swine Identification and Traceability System Working Committee**

Update for CCSI and CSBA Directors  
Pramod Mathur, March 2005

The National Swine Identification and Traceability System Working Committee is lead by CPC and consists of representatives from provincial pork councils, the packing industry, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Canadian Food Inspection Agency and Canadian swine breeders represented by CCSI and CSBA. These organisations are working together to develop a national traceability system with effective participation from breeders and producers in recording and tracking the farm animal movements. The main objective is to help minimise impact of a foreign animal disease outbreak, help mitigate the risks in the event of a food safety crisis, reinforce the access to domestic and export markets and improve the competitiveness of our industry. The Committee also invites observers and guest from Epidemio-Quality Inc., Atlantic Veterinary college, Clarkson Canada, etc. who have provided very valuable input. The Committee is chaired by Dennis McKerracher, Alberta Pork.

The Committee has been very active and had several meetings over the past months. The last meeting was on March 1, 2005. One of the main objectives was to discuss the draft recommendations from the pilot studies on identification and traceability. The recommendations focused on the following.

## **1: National Livestock Premises Registry**

A national livestock premise registry will be established to act as a foundation for any traceability system. In this context, a premise is defined as follows:

*“A premises is a land location based on land titles, deeds or geo-referenced coordinates where species included under the Health of Animals Regulations are housed, kept, assembled or disposed of. Where premises are contiguous, i.e. not separated by another land title or deeds, they may be registered as a single premise”.*

## **2: National Tattoo Numbering Scheme for Hogs Going to Slaughter**

A major part of animal movement in Canada is by Animals going to slaughter. Most of the slaughter pigs bear a five-character shoulder slap tattoo which is mainly used for identification of the owner and for financial settlement. A majority of these shoulder slap tattoos relate to the premise and about 85% of them are unique across provinces. However, minor modifications in the existing tattoo numbering scheme will be required to link the tattoo to last premises of residence and ownership.

## **3: Regional Slaughter and Marketing Board Databases**

Information from packing plants will be gathered to reconcile the animal movement information from the farm records. This will be done through a central database. Animals going to slaughter will be required to have corresponding shipping and receiving event that will allow for proper reconciling and correcting for any errors.

## **4: National Hog Identification and Movement Reporting System.**

The movement of all pigs will be tracked through a national database. All hog movement will be recorded and reported using individual identification or group identification as appropriate to specific movement scenarios.

The following are the minimum data fields for a national database.

- Date of movement
- License plate of conveyance
- Premises ID of origin
- Premises ID of destination
- Animal ID (individual or group)
- If it is a movement group: Number of hogs shipped, Number of hogs received

The recording and authenticity of the information will be co-ordinated by the provincial pork organizations.

In most cases when the animals are sent to slaughter a shoulder slap tattoo using group identification will be sufficient. However, in some other cases such as movement from one farm to another, to auctions, trade shows, etc., individual animal identification will be required. This individual animal identification does not have to be necessarily unique but should be always linked to premises. In particular, breeding animals may move in small groups or even as single animals and there are chances that some of these movements can be missed by a group lot traceability system.

### ***Identification of Breeding Stock***

A presentation was made to the Committee in December, 2004 about the national identification scheme used by members of CSBA and CCSI that has been working very effectively for many decades. The animals are individually identified by tattoos that are permanent and unique across Canada. CCSI's database has the identifications of about 3 million pigs from across Canada and about 90 thousand pigs are added every year.

The Committee recognised that breeding animals usually have permanent identifiers therefore visual ear tags with a national numbering scheme directly linked to premises can be used by a system similar to the one currently in place at CCSI for purebred stock. Communications with various breeding companies is needed and should be facilitated by CCSI to ensure their participation in the national identification scheme for breeding stock.

It is important to keep the following principles in mind for identification of individual animals.

- The identification is grossly visible to an inspector screening a pen, truckload or a group
- The identification is legible to an inspector capturing the detailed information in both live and dead animals
- The costs born by the system are optimised
- The method lends itself to automation

The breeders participating with CSBA and CCSI have an experience of using the national tattoo numbering scheme for a long time. One of the problems with the tattoos is that they are difficult to read from distance especially when the animals are being loaded on a transport vehicle. Many breeders use color coded ear tags for this purpose and they have become fairly permanent with the advancements in the tagging technology. The ear tags will also allow for using different herd letters in cases where the current herd letters are not directly linked to premises. The Committee is open to further suggestions from the Canadian swine breeders to have a system that will ensure their full and whole hearted co-operation. The draft recommendations from the Committee are being reviewed by CPC and it is planned to have consultations among various stakeholders in the different provinces across Canada.