



Canadian Cattle Identification Agency

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NEWS RELEASE

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO THE CANADIAN CATTLE IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM AS A RESULT OF BSE CASE

July 23, 2003

The Board of Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) met on July 10th to assess the performance of the National Identification program following the discovery of the single case of BSE on May 19th.

“We certainly didn’t want to put our program to such a critical test so early,” said CCIA Chairman Brad Wildeman, a cattle feeder from Lanigan, Saskatchewan, “but producers can be proud that this industry-designed program worked exactly as planned.”

The CCIA program was used to track down over 5000 individual tag numbers and CCIA was on the job providing the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) with all the traceout and traceback information they required. “But even as CCIA was working to assist in tracing animals we were also carefully evaluating the program to see if there were any things we needed to do to improve the program,” said Julie Stitt, the program administrator.

CCIA was unable to confirm the herd of origin of the cow at the heart of this issue but that is because the cow was much older than the program and had left her birth herd well before the program began. “This is an area we will have to strengthen at the first opportunity, namely the identity and herd of origin of older cows that have left their herd of origin,” said Stitt.

CCIA is pleased to report that the representatives of Cattle Buyers and Licensed Dealers and of the Livestock Markets Association of Canada stepped forward with resolutions supporting stricter enforcement at their sites. Beginning on Sept 1, 2003 CFIA will begin fuller enforcement of the Regulations that prohibit the transportation and the receipt of untagged animals. This means that, unless the animals fall under one of the four specific exemptions which allow untagged animals to be shipped to registered Community Pastures, Veterinary Clinics, Test Stations or Exhibition Sites, the trucker or the receiver of untagged cattle may be in violation and subject to a fine. Cattle being sent to an approved tagging site will, of course remain exempt.

“This enhanced enforcement is what we need,” says Wildeman, “and is no hardship to the vast majority of producers who already observe the rules. But it is obvious that from now on trading nations are going to require their trading partners to have credible and auditable livestock identification systems.”

While CFIA will continue to use their discretion in regards to lost tags, the intent of the program is to achieve 100% compliance. It is expected that the only tags that will be missing are those lost in transit, and that all cattle are properly identified immediately prior to transport. Untagged cattle may, of course, continue to be transported to and received by approved tagging facilities.

Those are the only immediate changes. But the Board has decided to eliminate the exemptions for Community Pastures, Exhibition Sites, Test Stations and Veterinary Clinics just as soon as the regulations can be amended. That means that the only exemption remaining will be the provision that allows untagged cattle to be transported to an approved tagging site.

CCIA was very successful in its ability to trace cattle and limit the number of herds and feedlots that were involved in this very difficult investigation. While we are always looking for ways to improve, the CCIA has no intention of introducing further changes unless they are necessary and do not add significantly to producer costs.

Canada must continue to do what is necessary to regain access to foreign markets. CCIA will continue to evaluate new technologies, such as Electronic ear tags, to determine how they can benefit the identification program as enhancements are considered.

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CCIA is a National industry not for profit identification traceback organization that is represented by all sectors of the cattle industry.