



Questions and Answers – National Hog ID and Traceability System Summer 2005

1. Why does the Canadian hog industry need a national ID and traceability program?

The hog production sector is one of the most significant in Canadian agriculture. In 2004, 31.7 million hogs were marketed, with farm cash receipts totalling over \$4.3 billion.

Currently, more than half of our product is sold to over 100 countries worldwide. If a domestic or foreign animal disease occurred in Canada, the border would close for hog and pork exports, and the production base would immediately shrink by 50 per cent. In a best case scenario, borders would close for a minimum of 90 days. It has been estimated that a foreign animal disease outbreak in Canada, such as foot-and-mouth disease, could cost as much as \$45 billion.

In order to reduce the economic, social and environmental impacts of an animal disease outbreak or a food safety crisis, the Canadian swine sector needs to develop a national identification and traceability system that will meet our own objectives and, at a minimum, meet the requirements for our domestic and foreign markets.

A national ID and traceability system for hogs will accomplish the following objectives:

- a) To help minimize the impacts of a foreign animal disease outbreak or a food safety crisis;
- b) To reinforce our domestic and export market access;
- c) To improve the competitiveness of our industry

2. Is there a hog traceability system currently in place?

The hog industry already has several measures in place to facilitate the tracing of animals. Currently in Canada, all hogs are identified with a shoulder slap tattoo prior to going to slaughter. This tattoo is the means of identification for producer payment, and also facilitates a level of traceability. Slaughter data is already being collected in some areas of Canada, which can be used as “trace-backs” for hogs. Plans are currently underway to collect this data in other jurisdictions.

However, to have a complete system that includes full ‘trace-back and forward’ capabilities, the industry must be able to identify where hogs are kept, assembled or disposed of, and identify all farm to farm movements.

The Canadian Pork Council is also involved with the Canadian Livestock Identification Agency to develop national traceability standards and policies to monitor *all* Canadian food animals. This is an ongoing process that will put the livestock sector in a position to identify all premises in Canada where animals are raised, quarantined, auctioned and slaughtered.

3. Why does the hog sector need to participate in a Canadian livestock identification & traceability system?

With animals and animal products being traded internationally in unprecedented quantities, there are greater risks of foreign animal disease outbreaks. We now live in a global village, and a greater number of people are travelling abroad – which is the largest potential source of disease transfer. Some foreign animal diseases affecting swine can be transmitted from and to other animals, as well as to humans. Therefore, a national identification and traceability system for all livestock would minimize potential risks resulting from a disease outbreak.

It is important to note that under regulations of the Health of Animals Act, Canada has a mandatory identification program for cattle, bison and sheep. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is now supporting the expansion of the existing system to include other livestock species, with a goal to developing strategies that minimize the impact of foreign animal disease outbreaks for Canadian livestock.

4. Why would the Canadian hog industry recommend developing a national ID and traceability program?

In July 2002, the Canadian Pork Council received the mandate from its members to coordinate the development of a national traceability system for pigs, from birth to slaughter:

“...the CPC will play a coordinating role within the pork industry in the development of a national strategy and action plan towards ensuring eradication, and a capability for zoning, of foreign animal diseases affecting swine. [...] The CPC will also continue to collaborate where possible with its counterparts in other livestock sectors as well as provincial governments, and there will be a particular focus on animal identification and location requirements...” (CPC Annual Board of Directors Meeting, July 2002)

The hog industry recognizes that all hog producers have a role to play in the protection of livestock health in Canada.

5. What would the Canadian hog ID and traceability program look like?

The principles of a national hog identification and traceability system are separated into four distinct elements. Each element is necessary for an efficient and integral identification and traceability system. Those elements being:

1. A livestock premises registry and database;
2. A national tattoo numbering registry for hogs going to slaughter;
3. A regional swine slaughter and marketing board database, and;
4. A national hog ID and movement reporting system and database.

6. What will the hog ID and traceability system do?

Our swine traceability system will support the three components of traceability, 1) identification of farms, 2) identification of animals, and, 3) tracking movement of animals. It will provide information on the precise location of swine premises, and trace the movements of live animals. This capability will permit the industry to trace movements backward and forwards between all premises including testing stations, auction, and assembly yards.

Capturing this information will help determine the pathways where infected animals could move and infect other premises, animals, and sometimes people. The ability to reduce the response time is key in limiting impacts of a animal disease outbreak, or food safety crisis.

In case of a crisis, the most important factor to reduce losses is to identify and contain the problem as quickly as possible.

7. Who is expected to do what?

Producers and stakeholders:

- Producers and industry operators (i.e.: auctions, abattoirs, assembly yards, etc.) will be responsible for recording and reporting all hog movement information to the national traceability movement database; this includes shipments sent and shipments received, whether by individual or group of animals.
- In specific cases (breeding stock or where hogs are commingled), for optimal traceability of pig movements, producers will be required to individually identify their hogs with a visual ear tag with a unique identification number.
- Producers will be responsible to shoulder slap tattoo all hogs going to slaughter.

Provincial pork industry organizations (or designate agent) will:

- Assure that all producers are registered and tattoo numbers are properly allocated within their province.
- Collect, provincially or regionally, traceability data for hogs raised.
- Help verify traceability data provided by producers either provincially, regionally or nationally, depending on the system as ultimately agreed to.

Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA):

- Will work with industry to develop strategies and regulations to ensure producers can effectively participate in traceability programs.
- Will enforce ID and traceability requirements once in place.

8. Who would have access to premises and hog movement information in the database?

- Operation owners will have controlled access to movement records for their own operation.
- Hog traceability management services (provincially or regionally) would have access to the information for management and verification purposes.
- Government veterinarians/ agencies would have access to data, as required, *only* in the event of an animal health emergencies, food safety crisis or for disease simulation trials.

9. Why would I have to ear-tag my pigs?

Detailed information is required of each pig that moves through any premises where pigs from multiple premises are housed, and their source and/or destination is not known (for example, auctions, shows, and testing stations).

When the complexity of commingling reduces the ability to efficiently trace and track rapidly, industry must develop tools that will ensure that hog movements can accurately be identified. It was recommended by the CPC National ID and Traceability System Working Committee, based on the findings of the pork pilot study that visual ear tags would be the most efficient means of identifying pigs when they are commingled or, “when their final destination is unknown.” The objective is to have hogs identified with an identifier that is accurately readable, particularly in situations where volume and speed are factors in the reading process.

10. Why would I have to ear tag my breeding herd if they already have an ear tattoo?

Pigs used for reproduction are moved in smaller groups, from one farm to many others. As a result, reproductive pigs will spread disease much faster and wider than the flow of commercial pigs to market. This is particularly true when we include the supply of semen from boar studs to sow herds. Because of this, the tracking of breeding stock should be captured in more detail using a permanent identification on the animal.

Because individual sows and boars can move as single animals, and can potentially be resold or moved for reproductive purposes to other farms, the identification of the animal must be unique to that animal.

The CFIA has stated that under the Health of Animals Act that an approved identifier must be clearly and accurately readable, particularly in a situation where volume and speed are factors in the reading process. A visual ear tag would serve that purpose.

11. What is the implementation timeline?

The implementation of the National Hog ID and Traceability is a four-year plan. A phased-in approach over time is proposed with the key components of the system in place well in advance of any requirement for full compliance. Once all systems are functionally in place, the program will become mandatory in the winter of 2008.

12. Who will pay for the system?

The Canadian Pork Council will initially seek funds for the Hog ID and Traceability System through government funding programs, although industry contributions are still required for the development of such a system. The system must be self-sustainable and the source of funds *may* be attached to the sale of tags, to movements reported to the database system, or to the sale of market hogs. Arrangements will have to be made to determine the relative cost for producers.

13. How much will the system cost?

The total cost related to a National Hog Identification and Traceability System is difficult to determine at this point. It is no secret that industry will bear a large portion of the relative cost of the system. It is important to note, however, that the impact of a foreign animal disease would be disastrous to the Canadian hog industry, and far outweighs the costs incurred in the development and maintenance of this system. The hog industry cannot afford to move forward without a traceability program.

It must be emphasized at the outset that a comprehensive identification and traceability system is not, in and of itself, a preventative measure against foreign animal diseases or a potential food safety problem. It is an emergency management tool that mitigates these risks. These are, to a great extent, unavoidable risks that we must always try to minimize by constant vigilance and by the creation of safeguards. The purpose of this system is to have the ability to quickly identify, trace, contain and eliminate such problems as a foreign animal disease incursion or a food safety issue.

14. What's next?

The CPC National ID and Traceability System Working Committee has recently completed the business plan for the future hog traceability system in Canada. Following the industry consultation sessions, a detailed system implementation plan will be developed, based on the Working Group's recommendations and consultation feedback.

This program will need to be phased in over time, with systems in place well in advance of any expectation for full compliance. The National Identification and Traceability Working Committee has come to an inescapable conclusion that the program cannot prove effective unless it is mandatory. The recommendation is that the national identification system be mandatory after effective trials have been conducted successfully, and that regulatory process with the CFIA be initiated for 2008 implementation.

15. How do I report my movements and how often?

All movement information will be reported directly into a centralized movement database that will be managed by a management agency. Reporting of movements will be performed through automated means, i.e.: Internet, file uploads, telephone. All hog movements, including hogs going to slaughter, will be required to be reported both as a shipping and as a receiving event. Abattoirs must provide all of the information needed (minimum data fields) for verification of animal movements to slaughter.

Initially, all movements must be reported within less than two (2) days of when the actual movement occurred. Furthermore, information for traceability purposes must come directly from the premises where the movement occurred, or from the farm's administrative offices.

Further discussions are taking place to explore other means to obtain close to real-time hog movement information, for example: reporting of animal movements by automated means, such as real-time file uploads, when the animals are loaded or unloaded.

16. How will compliance be ensured?

Verification of reporting information and timeframes will influence the containment capabilities of the system. The farm operator/owner will be held responsible for forwarding all movement information to the database.

In order to have an efficient and integral ID and traceability system, industry and the CFIA must develop strategies to ensure compliance. The CFIA, in conjunction with industry, will develop the necessary compliance measures, in the form of regulations, to ensure the future integrity of the hog identification and traceability system. CFIA is an active participant on the National Identification and Traceability System Working Committee.

17. What are you doing about wild boar farms?

The CPC National Identification and Traceability System Working Group recognizes that wild boar operations could potentially spread animal diseases that are damaging to the Canadian hog industry.

The Working Group currently recommends focusing ID and traceability efforts to all operations (i.e.: assembly yards, auctions, abattoirs) directly related to the day-to-day commercial hog farm operations. Once the national hog ID and traceability system is running, the Working Group will initiate discussion with livestock groups that do not participate in a traceability program in order to demonstrate the strategies and importance of tracking and tracing all livestock in Canada.

18. What do you do if a hog producer has more than one livestock species on a farm?

All operations that have one or more livestock species will be recorded into a national premises repository that will be housed with the Canadian Livestock Identification Agency. Therefore, records will exist for all locations that house single or multiple livestock species in Canada.

For the purpose of capturing hog movement data, operations that contain more than one livestock species on a given premises will have to declare all species on the farm but will be required to report all hog movements to the national movement database. Specific livestock specie groups are responsible for developing their ID and traceability programs that meet the need of their industry.

Canadian Pork Council