

Animal Disease Traceability Update, Dr. Tony Frazier, State Veterinarian:

For quite sometime now we have been working towards advancing official identification of certain cattle so that we could respond quickly to any disease outbreak. And this year we announced a Time Line that had been proposed by USDA/APHIS/VS that provided for the continued transition away from the metal ear tags to electronic tags. After much discussion we agreed with the Time Line and developed a plan for cattle producers in Alabama. In addition, leadership with the Alabama Cattlemen's Association proposed a cost share program for livestock markets to invest in the purchase of electronic tag readers and computer equipment to use these types of tags. The Alabama Department of Agriculture would, through my office, provide electronic tags to these markets during this transition period.

Within the last couple of weeks, the USDA announced that they would be "Pausing" the Time Line for the transition to the electronic tags and develop a formal comment period. As of this update we have not been informed of details of this process. The current ADT rule that requires all beef cattle that are 18 months of age and older, all dairy cattle and all exhibition and show cattle that cross state lines or enter commerce to be officially identified, has not changed.

Here at the Department of Agriculture we will continue to transition to the use of official electronic tags and support the livestock markets that have taken advantage of the cost share program with ACA with these type tags. We will be working with the Cooperative Extension Veterinarian to develop potential research programs that review different types of electronic tags and the different frequencies such as low-frequency and high-frequency tags. We here in Alabama will continue to move forward and advance electronic traceability.

If you have any questions about this issue please do not hesitate to contact my office at 334-240-7253.