

LIBERTY OR SECURITY

Do we have to choose?

By Karen Brown. Illustrations by John Bardwell.

“Those who would give up essential liberty to purchase a little temporary safety, deserve neither liberty nor safety.”

—BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, 1759

How well does the government protect you from drunk drivers? How well did the government protect the victims of Hurricane Katrina from vandalism, looting, rape and murder? How well does the government protect the U.S. citizens on the Mexican border? How well does the government stop the immigration of illegal aliens? How well does the government protect schoolchildren from illegal drugs? How well does the government protect you from the flu, which kills 36,000 Americans each year?

Are you a meat eater? Do you wear leather boots or carry a leather purse or wallet? Are you ready to pay higher prices for your steak dinner and your Tony Lamas?

Dare I ask you to take action before another of our God-given rights is blatantly stolen? Or do you believe we should all be responsible and “cooperate” with the government? The Jews tried that in Germany. It didn't work out so well.

To buy into the idea that the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) will protect our animals from terrorism is naïve at best. To buy into the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) statement that NAIS was implemented strictly to save us from the spread of disease in our food-animal chain is worse than naïve.

It's not about protection or control of animal disease; we already have safeguards in place in every livestock species sector. These controls have proven sufficient time and again. The USDA admits that. What they don't admit is that NAIS is about big agribusiness selling beef overseas. It's about computer-chip companies making millions of dollars



selling hundreds of millions of RFIDs [radio frequency IDs] and millions of transponders to people forced to buy their products. It's about private database companies making millions recording and storing billions of details about where you live, what you own, and what you do with what you own.

NAIS does nothing for anyone except the Monsanto, ADMs, and Cargills of the world. If you're not one of those, you will pay the cost of these corporations' future profits with your hard-earned dollars and the last vestiges of your constitutional rights.

The USDA has been slowly, gently promoting the NAIS with propaganda designed to make animal owners believe it's their duty to comply for the sake of national security. Once the program becomes mandatory, as it

is slated to be by 2009 if 100 percent voluntary compliance is not achieved, the NAIS will be handed over to Homeland Security. Any person who owns livestock animals or purchases any products made from these animals will be directly affected by this program, which has many flaws, such as:

- The comprehensive nature of the scope of NAIS is not in alignment with its stated purposes—control of disease of “preharvest” animals. However, the species included in the program exceed the limits of animals harvested for food or that can transmit disease to humans. The complete list includes cattle, swine, sheep, goats, horses, poultry, bison, deer, elk, llamas, and alpacas.

- The USDA fails to examine existing protocols to determine if these procedures are

adequate as they exist or with some modifications. Nearly every animal industry has systems in place to locate and control disease; if they do not work it generally is due to lack of human reporting. The NAIS will fail for the same reason.

■ The cost of manpower, technical support, hardware and computer systems required to make the NAIS program successful far exceeds any budgetary projections made by the USDA or state commissions such as the Texas Animal Health Commission. The NAIS Implementation Plan states: "The ability to achieve the 48-hour trace-back goal is directly related to the percentage of animal movements that are recorded and will require significant infrastructure throughout

the preharvest production chain." Yet, there is no discussion of where the funds for this infrastructure will come from or what the true cost to animal owners will be.

■ As stated in the text of the NAIS Implementation Plan, the success of the program is dependent upon "a high degree of producer participation." As we all know, any system dependent upon human willingness to participate has a major design flaw. We already have those types of systems; we don't need another one with the same flaw to overlap or supersede existing ones.

■ As stated in the Implementation Plan: "To achieve high reliability with the 48-hour trace-back goal, a high percentage of animal movement records needs to be collected and

available electronically." The USDA reports a current population of 97.1 million cattle. Add to that all the sheep, goats, horses, elk, deer, swine, bison, llamas, and alpacas. The poultry industry produces over seven billion chickens per year. That's over 200 million animals and seven billion birds, for which every movement must be tracked in order for the NAIS system to be effective. We can't keep up with kids skipping school; we can't find aliens with expired visas; we can't stop illegals from crossing a defined border. But, we're going to keep track of how many movements of how many animals? And, we're going to keep that computerized data secret and secure?

■ The monumental amount of data stored to track every movement of hun-

TRACKING YOUR ASS, YOUR COW, YOUR PIG . . .

Whether you like it or not. By Henry Lamb

The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) was nurtured through the Identification Committee of the International Committee on Animal Recording and the ISO Working Group for International Standards for Electronic Identification of Animals by Neil Hammerschmidt. The National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA) took the plan under its wing in the United States, and in 2002 proposed that the USDA join them in the development of a full-blown national animal identification system. Eager to comply with "international obligations," the USDA agreed, and named Neil Hammerschmidt as coordinator of the U.S. program.

The NIAA is not your ordinary trade association NGO (nongovernmental organization). Its members represent the biggest meat producers in the United States, including Cargill Meat Solutions and the National Pork Producers Council, and the makers of high-tech animal-ID equipment—all industries that stand to profit from the implementation of the NAIS.

For three years this tight-knit group of businessmen and bureaucrats designed the perfect program in near secrecy. They boasted that, "in listening sessions held by the Animal and Plant Inspection Service [June-November 2004], 59 of 60 comments indicated support for NAIS." This is the kind of distortion you get when you carefully choose the people who are invited to the listening sessions. Shortly after the USDA announced the pro-

gram to the public in July 2005, another listening session was held in Texas, which drew more than 200 vocal opponents and more than 700 comments, the vast majority of which vehemently opposed the program.

Congress has given the USDA more than \$80 million to develop the program, which was used, in part, to provide a honeypot for states and organizations that agreed to help implement the program. Another \$33 million is included in the 2007 appropriations.

Originally the program consisted of three elements: (1) premises registration; (2) identification of all livestock animals with an electronic identification device; and (3) reporting of all off-premises movements of any identified animal within 24 hours.

This didn't sit well with many people outside the designers' immediate circle. So the USDA plan was redesigned and rereleased in April 2006. The term "mandatory" was dropped. It was promoted as a voluntary program and the data collected would be kept in multiple, privately owned databases. But when pressed in a news conference, Mike Johanns, secretary of the Department of Agriculture, made it abundantly clear that if voluntary participation was less than 100 percent, he had both the authority and the inclination to make the program mandatory.

Outrage among the governed—the folks who have to comply with USDA programs—forced yet another revision of the program, released June 2, 2006. This 12-page "Guide for

Small-Scale or Non-Commercial Producers" strongly suggests that the program is completely voluntary, and contains no penalties or enforcement provisions. If the NAIS were truly intended to be "participate if you wish," with no penalties or enforcement, why bother? Why would the government be spending more than \$100 million to design and implement a program if it didn't care whether or not anyone participated?

Several nations are much further along with the implementation of an animal identification program than the United States. This means that other nations are building export customers that the United States can't yet reach. This is infuriating to the businessmen and bureaucrat-designers of the U.S. program who are now turning to Congress to get the program implemented. Lobbyists are swarming like bees—all carrying campaign contributions to selected influential congressmen.

If a mandatory program is ever implemented, the benefits will not flow to the people who produce or consume livestock products. The benefits will flow to the businessmen and bureaucrats who designed and will administer the program. ■

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dreds of millions of animals might not crash the computer systems, but who is going to enforce the reporting process? Every failure to report movement compromises the success of the program. The plan states: "The completeness of animal movement records will directly affect the effectiveness of the response to a detected disease and the reliability for achieving the long-term 48-hour trace-back/trace-forward goal." Doomed from the start!

■ One provision allows for Group Identification Numbers to be placed upon any segment of a species that is formed into a herd or group that moves through the preharvest chain together from birth to termination. This allows one animal to be tagged that is representative of the entire group. To date, I have found nothing to explain how the integrity of these groups will be maintained. If a rancher has a herd of 2,000 cattle and 10 of them get sick, he's going to separate those animals from the herd. This herd is now compromised and those 10 sick animals have no ID tag. Who's to say when, if, and where those 10 head are put back into the herd? And how does anyone know which herd they become mingled with?

Also, this provision radically reduces the costs to the large herd owners. If your herd doesn't qualify for a group ID, then you must

tag/chip every animal. Obviously, a small farm's cost will be greater than a corporate competitor's, giving the mega-producers even more of an edge. (In case you don't know, it's the giant corporate agribusinesses that are supporting NAIS.) Not to mention, you can't cheat the system by switching animals from one herd to another like producers with group ID tags could.

■ The only cost being discussed at this point in the USDA plan pertains to premises registration. This cost will be nominal (FREE if you sign up now!) and has been portrayed by some to be "just another tax" and nothing to be bothered about. However, the cost of individual ID tags or chips, their implantation, and the cost to have them scanned at every location through the life of the animals have not been discussed.

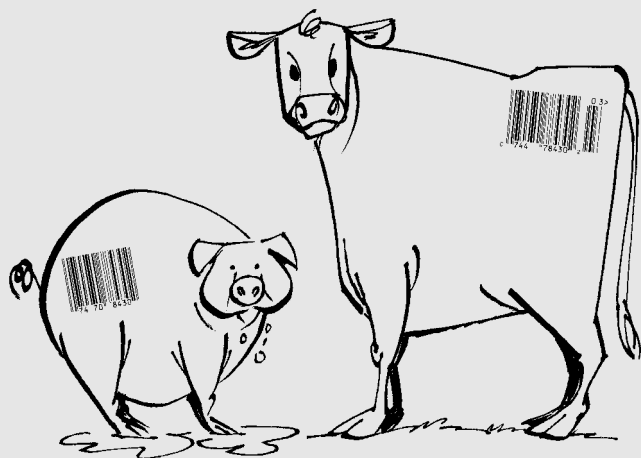
Once the program reaches this level of implementation, it will be too late to change your mind about participating; thus, the cost cannot be controlled by market demand. It will be determined by the need to secure funds to operate the NAIS system or to fill government and private manufacturers' coffers. No one really knows how much that will be and it won't matter because if you don't want to pay \$1,000 fines, have your kid's pony confiscated, or go to jail for noncompliance, you will pay.

Finally, the NAIS system will be largely dependent upon RFID chips. The information on these chips can be read by homemade gadgets. The information can be changed after implantation by homemade gadgets. How does technology that can be easily altered by any high school techie protect the American food chain?

The NAIS, as it is being implemented, *cannot* protect animals from contamination via terrorism or disease. By the time this fact becomes history, the government will have all your personal and private property, animal ownership and usage stored in questionably secure databases. The cost of owning livestock will have risen. The cost of every product made from animals will have increased. Animal owners will have become burdened with reporting requirements punishable with \$1,000 fines for failure to report, for every time you haul a bull to the sale, ride over to the neighbors' ranch to help with branding, or take your daughter to the 4-H barrel race.

Will you fight for free America or hold your arm out to get your number tattooed? ■

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WHAT CAN YOU DO?

VISIT these Web sites and learn what NAIS is really all about.

- www.usda.gov/nais <<http://www.usda.gov/nais>>
- www.farmandranchfreedom.org
- www.noanimalid.com
- www.nonais.org
- www.stopanimalid.org
- www.tofga.org
- www.nationalpropertyowners.org

SIGN petitions at:

- www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/369063795?tl=1135563679
- www.petitiononline.com/TAHCAIS2/petition.html

WRITE your congressmen. Send letters to their offices or go to:

- www.congress.org and send an e-mail. This site will give you the names and e-mail addresses of your representatives, and is set up so you can send the e-mail directly from the site.

ALSO:

- Sign any petition you can find against the NAIS or any form thereof. Start your own petition at your boarding facility, church, local ranch and farmers' associations, or work. You don't have to own animals to have an opinion about this program.
- Write or e-mail every politician in your city, county, state, and federal governments.
- Write or e-mail any animal associations or organizations you are involved with and express your beliefs about this system.
- Write or e-mail the appropriate animal associations for the species of animals you own as well as any other nongovernmental organizations that are directly involved in animal welfare.
- Educate every group of any kind you are associated with. This matter concerns every purchaser of animal products, not just animal owners. Get them to follow this list. Spread the word and take action while you still can.