

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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From: Colorado Coalition Opposing Mandatory 4-H and FFA Premises I.D.

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## **State-Wide Coalition Urges CSU's Cooperative Extension To Return To Its Mission of Education and Outreach**

The Colorado Coalition Opposing Mandatory 4-H and FFA Premises Registration has confirmed that Colorado State University's Cooperative Extension Service will conduct a review of its mandatory 4-H premises identification policy following the Colorado State Fair this year, but the institution has stipulated that the review does not mean the policy will be rescinded. Incoming Director of Extension, Dr. Debra Young, will be responsible for conducting the review. Young will replace Dr. Marc Johnson, who currently serves as Interim Director.

On March 28, 2007 Colorado State 4-H Director Jeff Goodwin issued a directive to Colorado County Extension Agents indicating that all Colorado 4-H livestock project animals (beef and dairy cattle, sheep, swine, goat, poultry, llama and horse) must have a premises registration for participation in 4-H and FFA projects after October 1, 2007. The decision to implement state wide mandatory premises registration for 4-H youth in Colorado was an arbitrary decision made in September 2006 by the 4-H Livestock Task Force, which was comprised of 15 to 20 county extension agents. The State 4-H Director and Dr. Marc Johnson agreed.

"The time to seek input from Colorado 4-H families about the decision to mandate premises registration for youth was before the directive was issued, not after the fact," commented John Reid, Ordway, CO, Chairman of the Coalition. "The 4-H families directly impacted by this decision were not permitted to participate in the decision-making process, signaling a significant disconnect between the land grant university and its constituents. The coalition urges Colorado State University administrators to leave participation in premises registrations as a voluntary program, as it is on the federal level. "

"The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) will have no effect on preventing animal disease, since it will only be called into use after a disease outbreak," noted Reid. "The Livestock Act of 2005 equips the State of Colorado with the appropriate mechanisms to implement mandatory premises registrations and animal identification in the event of a disease outbreak," continued Reid.

"Learning institutions, like our land grant universities, should be using precious resources to educate future producers about animal health disease controls and mitigation and proper animal management techniques. University resources being spent on the premises registration issue would be much more effectively used to educate 4-H youth about animal disease causes, prevention, risk

mitigation and food safety, and we urge Cooperative Extension to develop such a curriculum for 4-H.  
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In a letter dated June 1, 2007 to Colorado County Commissioners, Dr. Marc Johnson stated,

"4-H is an educational program for youth which is based on experiential learning. 4-H establishes contest rules to provide fair and safe learning experiences which transmit knowledge and principles which last long beyond the county or state fair event...laws do not currently require record keeping, meat quality assurance training, premises registration, or the wearing of closed-toe shoes, but all of these items are in 4-H livestock contest rules to provide learning of business practice, product quality, public health and safety related to livestock production. Presently there is a small portion of the public opposed to premises registration of livestock as a national policy; this group is using 4-H youth to advance their political action. This debate should stay in the public policy arena rather than in the non-political, non-policy arena of youth educational events."

Reid responded saying, "Dr. Johnson is correct that this issue should remain in the public policy arena rather than being mandated by Cooperative Extension for youth events. The university's action to implement mandatory premises registration for 4-H youth put this debate squarely in the arena of youth education events. He is incorrect when he describes those opposed as a 'small' group. The action taken by Colorado State University's Cooperative Extension is widely viewed as predatory exploitation of youth rooted in an effort to enhance the number of livestock premises registered in Colorado. The meat quality assurance program is certainly an educational program that youngsters benefit from. It does not, however, require the enrollment of private property as a prerequisite for participation."

"One has to wonder why, with a new Director of Extension taking over later this summer, Colorado State University administrators have chosen to saddle this person with such a controversial and unpopular mandate," continued Reid. "It would have been much wiser to let the new appointee come into her position and permit her to seek appropriate public input. One has to ask, who benefits from this decision and what's the rush. The coalition urges Colorado State University's Cooperative Extension Program to get back to its mission of education and outreach."

*Individuals or organizations wishing to join the Colorado Coalition Opposing Mandatory 4-H and FFA Premises Registration should contact John Reid at 719/446.5210*