

## 4-H and FFA Mandatory Premises Registration Opposition Talking Points

**Statement from Jeff Goodwin, Director, 4-H Youth Development Programs, Colorado State University, March 28, 2007:** *4-H is a program administrated by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). An effective National Animal Identification System (NAIS) protocol is important to protect the livestock industry. The first step of NAIS is premises registration in all segments of the livestock industry. In support of this national initiative, all Colorado 4-H livestock project animals (beef and dairy cattle, sheep, swine, goat, poultry, llama and horse) must have a premises registration. As of October 1, 2007 premises registration with NAIS will required at livestock project enrollment in the Colorado 4-H program. The Colorado FFA program will have an identical policy beginning October 2007. County fair boards are also encouraged to adopt similar policies.*

- The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) has **not** been mandated by Congress. Opposition from livestock owners forced federal officials to redesign the program as voluntary. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is on public record assuring livestock producers that the program remains voluntary. There is **no** legislation supporting state or federal action to make premises registration mandatory for youth involved in 4-H or FFA.
- The Livestock Act of 2005 grants authority to the Colorado State Department of Agriculture to mandate premises registration **only** if there a reportable disease outbreak; i.e., tuberculosis, brucellosis, vesicular stomatitis, foot and mouth disease, and **only for affected facilities**.
- USDA has entered into a “cooperative agreement” with the Colorado Department of Agriculture authorizing the Colorado State Department of Agriculture to enhance **voluntary** premises registrations. USDA’s language is very clear about voluntary. This cooperative agreement awarded the Colorado Department of Agriculture a \$367,000 grant for 2007 for this purpose.
- The Colorado 4-H program director, Jeff Goodwin, has initiated implementation of **mandatory** premises registration for Colorado 4-H youth involved in live animal projects for 2007 at the county fair and state fair levels. Goodwin has also stated that **mandatory** animal identification will be implemented for 4-H youth in 2008.
- State-wide implementation of mandatory premises registration for 4-H youth was an arbitrary decision made in September 2006 by the 4-H Livestock Task Force, which was comprised of 15 - 20 county extension agents. The State 4-H Director agreed, as did the Colorado State University Extension Director Marc Johnson. *(Taken from 4-H Premises*

*Registration talking points produced by Jeff Goodwin*). 4-H Leaders and 4-H Councils at the county level were not consulted in this decision making. Stakeholders were not given a voice in the process. Those who are directly impacted by this decision were not allowed adequate or appropriate input.

- Only 25 percent of livestock production operations nation wide have registered for premises registration. In May 2007 Arizona became the first state in the nation to prohibit mandatory participation in NAIS by passing legislation prohibiting same. At least a dozen other states are considering legislation to block efforts by both state and federal governments to require livestock owners to participate in NAIS, demonstrating the overwhelming unpopularity of the proposed NAIS system.
- An existing program is already in place to identify animals intended for exhibition at the county and state fair levels. At weigh-in market animals are ear tagged and tattooed and market cattle are nose-printed for identification.
- Seventeen states, including Colorado, have brand laws, putting another mechanism into place for the tracking of cattle transactions and movements.
- Forcing 4-H and FFA youth to register for premises numbers as a prerequisite to participating in 4-H and FFA live animal projects is a predatory and discriminatory action aimed at increasing the number of premises registered and is widely viewed as using youngsters to obtain premises registrations from their families. Nationally, more than one million 4-H members enroll in beef and dairy cattle, sheep, swine, goat, poultry and horse projects and a large percent exhibit livestock at county, state and regional events. National enrollment in FFA is 495,046. (*National 4-H Headquarters 2003*) Making premises registration mandatory for 4-H and FFA programs provides a captive supply of available premises, whereby the program is made mandatory for nearly 1.5 million property owners.
- By its own admission, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension is using this mandatory approach to premises registration as one of many educational tools to not only train and educate youth, but their parents as well, regarding environmental and livestock stewardship. It is an insult to CSU's constituency that university officials and Extension officials believe they must mandate a program in order to educate the taxpaying populace.
- If the Colorado State University Cooperative Extension is truly interested in educating youth and their parents regarding environmental and livestock stewardship it is illogical that officials have not provided or circulated an appropriate accompanying

curriculum to accomplish this purpose. The Colorado Coalition Opposing Mandatory Premises Registration for 4-H and FFA suggests that managing animal health risk is a core principle of livestock production and is an educational opportunity the Cooperative Extension Service should work to integrate youth into. However, the Coalition finds no educational value in forcing youth to participate in a mandatory premises registration program. Rather, the Cooperative Extension Service should engage in educational animal health seminars for youth throughout the state based on a well thought out curriculum that encompasses animal disease threats such as tuberculosis, brucellosis, foot and mouth disease and vesicular stomatitis. The current proposal by Colorado State University Cooperative Extension Service provides only for mandatory premises registration, not an educational program by which youth will learn about animal disease threats, their causes and appropriate management.

- NAIS would establish a permanent database of citizens' real property (the homes and farms or ranches where animals are kept). Information collected on people's homes and property is not protected from disclosure. Individuals whose property is registered will be vulnerable to competitive misuse of the information or sale of their information.
- A premises registration clouds the title to property and should be the property owner's independent and voluntary decision. 4-H and FFA youth cannot legally encumber landowners property without the landowners consent and cooperation. Despite this fact, 4-H Program Director Jeff Goodwin advised an audience of 4-H families in Lincoln County Colorado in April 2007 that if a landowner refused to register for a premises number the 4-H member "should do it anyway."
- 4-H and FFA are voluntary programs and, by law, must be administered without prejudice or discrimination. Mandating premises registration for 4-H and FFA youth enrolled in live animal projects discriminates against and penalizes youngsters who choose to enroll in these projects and whose parents or guardians have not chosen to register their premises under the voluntary NAIS system.
- Unanswered questions about NAIS will remain until USDA explores ways to better utilize existing animal identification systems and relies more on state animal health departments to implement a voluntary system so as to let the program mature and earn producers' trust. Implementing a mandatory NAIS system for Colorado's 4-H and FFA youth is not within the scope of the Cooperative Extension Service.
- Foisting this mandatory program on 4-H and FFA youth presents participating counties and the State of Colorado with potential civil liabilities. The Colorado Coalition Opposing Mandatory Premises Registration for 4-H and FFA urges the State

Department of Agriculture and Colorado State University to immediately halt this initiative and seek an opinion on this process from the State Attorney General in order to better understand the potential liabilities.

*These talking points have been provided by the Colorado Coalition Opposing Mandatory 4-H and FFA Animal I.D., John Reid, Ordway, Colorado, Chair.*