

Will Retailers Be In The Chips?

Horses Appear Destined to be Part of NAIS

The battle over the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) and its application in the equine industry has been blazing for months. It appears that horse owners will be part of the program once the federal government produces the final version.

The primary purpose of the program is to address animal health emergencies, primarily in the livestock industry. It would require each animal to carry an identification chip to let anyone know with the wave of a scanner where the animal originated. Impetus for the system grew following the BSE scare in 2004.

While the system makes sense to most cattle, swine and sheep owners, the efficacy of NAIS for horses owners is less understood and regularly sparks debate. Since horses aren't consumed by humans, why the need to track them? Is it really necessary for someone who owns a backyard horse to pay for a chip and have it installed? Isn't this just a ploy by the U.S. Government to get into the pockets of horse owners?

For retailers, there's an additional

question: Are they going to have the opportunity to participate in any fashion in this massive program?

One company now preparing for the onset of NAIS sees at least a limited role for retailers. Bio-Thermo is preparing to market a temperature-sensing, implantable microchip designed for horses.

In addition to providing a horse's body temperature with the wave of a scanner, the microchip will also have the capacity to hold the data many believe will be required by NAIS upon implementation. It will also provide a method of identification when ownership disputes arise and will be an invaluable theft-prevention tool.

Kevin N. McGrath, CEO of Digital Angel, the manufacturer of the grain of rice-sized Bio-Thermo chip, said that since implantation must be performed by a veterinarian, it's unlikely that they would be sold by equine retailers. However, the hand-held scanning device will probably be sold through retailers.

For more information on NAIS, visit www.horsecouncil.org/equineid.htm.


CEBS Builds Support

The Texas A&M University System's Board of Regents could determine as soon as this month whether to move forward with a plan to create an Equine Business Studies Center.

For the past several months, representatives from the university have been meeting with equine industry representatives, seeking support for the idea.

The center would collect and analyze data to fully describe the impact of the horse industry in the United States, providing a raft of information that would help manufacturers and retailers make business decisions based on solid documentation, not hunch or guess.

The center would also be used to develop an equine economics curriculum at Texas A&M, producing annual reports and conducting research.

In addition to seed funding from the equine industry and whatever money the university commits, the center would be funded through membership fees for individuals and organizations. To learn more about the center and follow its progress, visit <http://cebs.tamu.edu>. 



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