

## **Pennsylvania Premises Identification Program to Protect Against Animal Disease** Program Identifies Farm Locations, Not Individual Animals

HARRISBURG, Pa., Aug. 21 -- Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff today announced that Pennsylvania has begun a premises identification program to help animal health officials track and contain animal disease outbreaks in the commonwealth.

"Knowing the location of livestock operations in Pennsylvania is essential to protecting our food supply from disease outbreaks," said Wolff. "Upon discovery of a disease in the commonwealth, animal health officials will be able to immediately contact identified locations near the outbreak, giving them symptoms to look for and biosecurity measures to protect their livestock.

"In addition, premises identification will help ensure the quality and safety of Pennsylvania food for international trade, which will help our producers enter previously closed foreign markets."

Premises identification numbers work similar to mailing addresses. The program identifies locations only, and is not linked to any individual or specific animal. As farms change ownership, the farm's ID number will remain the same.

Currently, premises with animals participating in various disease certification programs may have to use different numbers for each program. The new premises identification will replace those numbers, streamlining the state's information system and helping farmers maintain their records.

"The assigned premises numbers will work together with Pennsylvania's award-winning animal health computer system, further improving the state's ability to effectively and efficiently prevent and manage disease outbreaks," said Wolff.

Using premises information, animal health officials can more precisely issue quarantine orders, thereby avoiding unnecessary quarantines and allowing farms and agribusinesses to continue operating normally. Each year, the Department of Agriculture issues more than 400 quarantines for various diseases.

Premises identification is also part of the state's response plan to all hazards involving animals. In the event of a flood, fire, accident or other disaster, premises information will work with state and county animal response teams to locate suitable emergency shelter for displaced or injured animals.

To date, more than 25,000 premises identification numbers have been provided to Pennsylvania farmers, replacing existing program and laboratory identification numbers. Pennsylvania is the second-leading state in number of premises identified nationally.

The Department of Agriculture, working with Penn State University, has created a Web site and toll-free number for premises identification. To obtain a premises number or add an animal species to a premises, producers can call 1-877-722-4724 or visit <http://farminfo.psu.edu>. By signing up for a free identification number, producers will ensure that their farms can be notified immediately during an animal disease outbreak. Animal health officials will be unable to contact farms that have not registered.

Pennsylvania's premises identification system is coordinated with the United States Department of Agriculture's standards, ensuring that premises numbers will not be duplicated by another state.

For more information, call 717-772-2852 or visit <http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us> and click on "Pennsylvania Premises Identification." CONTACT: Chris L. Ryder (717) 787-5085