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Kansas Announces Cattle Trace Pilot Program for Disease Traceability

MANHATTAN, Kan. — Governor Jeff Colyer and Secretary Jackie McClaskey joined leaders from the Kansas livestock industry on Saturday, June 30, at Barton County Feeders in Ellinwood to announce the Cattle Trace pilot project. Cattle Trace is a public-private partnership which will develop and test a purpose-built cattle disease traceability infrastructure in Kansas that will guide discussion and development of traceability on a national scale.

“Kansas is home to the finest beef producers and operations in the nation,” said Colyer. “We are proud that the Kansas beef industry has taken the lead in this important project that will enhance our ability to protect cattle health here and across the nation.”

Cattle disease traceability is an important component in the overall biosecurity of the U.S. beef cattle industry, playing a significant role in resuming and maintaining commerce in the event of a disease outbreak. The development of a viable end-to-end cattle disease traceability system is a top priority in the beef industry in Kansas and nationwide.

“KLA members have long recognized the importance of traceability for animal disease purposes to help protect their livelihoods and the industry,” said Kansas Livestock Association Chief Executive Officer Matt Teagarden. “We are excited to be part of this effort to move traceability forward for Kansas producers and ultimately the entire U.S. livestock sector.” KLA members amended policy in December 2017 to support mandatory cattle disease traceability for all ages of cattle. This policy shift provided momentum across Kansas to take action.

From end-to-end, each step of the beef cattle supply chain exists in Kansas, positioning the state well to test an expanded system capable of informing and guiding development of an enhanced traceability system on a national level.

“We have the opportunity to develop a cattle disease traceability system on our terms. The capabilities of Cattle Trace will enable us to do the right thing for animal health and biosecurity, and for the entire U.S. beef cattle industry,” said Brandon Depenbusch, vice president of cattle operations for Innovative Livestock Services, a member of the Cattle Trace steering committee. ILS will be one of at least ten feed yards that will participate in the pilot project in addition to livestock markets, cow-calf ranches and beef processors.

In early 2018, the Cattle Trace collaborators began working to develop a purpose-built infrastructure to track cattle movement through the supply chain. Cattle Trace will utilize ultra-high frequency technologies to collect the minimal data necessary, including an individual animal identification number, a GPS location, and date and time, in order to track animals in the event of a disease outbreak. Tag readers will be located at livestock markets, feed yards and beef processors. Movement data collection will begin in fall 2018, and the project will continue for approximately two years.

“We know for a traceability system to be effective, it needs to be simple, fast, and affordable to make its adoption within the industry as seamless as possible,” said Brad White, director of the Beef Cattle Institute at Kansas State University. “We are working to build a system to test today and one that will serve the U.S. beef cattle industry in the future.”

Cattle Trace is a collaborative partnership between Kansas State University, the Kansas Livestock Association, the Kansas Department of Agriculture, USDA, and individual producer stakeholders. It is being jointly funded by public and private resources.

“The development of Cattle Trace is a direct result of proactive leaders in the Kansas beef industry recognizing an opportunity to develop a traceability system that works for producers,” said Secretary McClaskey. “We have seen tremendous leadership from industry partners ready to step up and take an active role on this critical issue.”

For more information about the Cattle Trace project, go to cattletrace.org or contact the program coordinator, Cassie Kniebel, at info@cattletrace.org or 785-564-7446.

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