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Protecting livestock and the agriculture industry with premises identification



Livestock producers work every day to ensure the health and welfare of their animals. But what happens when a province-wide emergency, such as a disease outbreak or natural disaster, occurs that is beyond the control of a single producer?

Jeff Clark, Director of PigTRACE Canada, stated this is where a national traceability system, including provincial premises identification (PID) databases, becomes crucial: "If there were to be a disease response, you could have a five-kilometre buffer zone ... we need to know all the livestock operations in that area, potentially quarantine them, do a stop-movement order. We don't want trucks and disease spreading around."

As one of the three pillars of traceability, PID is used to link livestock and poultry to geographic locations. In Saskatchewan, having a PID number is mandatory for livestock producers under the Premises Identification Regulations, 2016.

"PID is critical to support disease control activities and for managing animal health emergencies," said Melissa Hurst, the Ministry's Provincial Livestock Traceability Specialist. "Having a PID number for your operation allows for traceability information to be accessed quickly for the protection of animal health, public health and market access for your industry."

The market access issue can be particularly important during a disease outbreak.

"Whether it is Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea, African Swine Fever, Foot and Mouth Disease or some type of new bug, our only

hope of potentially containing and eradicating the issue and proving to the world that we are free of the disease lies in our traceability programs," said Mark Ferguson, Manager of Industry and Policy Analysis at the Saskatchewan Pork Development Board.

Despite these benefits, the uptake of PID across sectors and provinces has varied. Clark said that PigTRACE Canada, an industry-led traceability system that requires pork producers across Canada to be registered in their provincial PID systems, had a 75-per-cent compliance rate as of October 2018. Ferguson said he finds pork producers in Saskatchewan aren't hesitant to enrol, once aware of the system, while Hurst reported that, overall, livestock sectors in the province have an enrolment of 48 per cent.

Clark said that when he hears producers express their hesitancy to enrol, it's often due to privacy concerns. He combats this by explaining that any information provided during enrolment is only used in an emergency, to narrow down where a disease outbreak originated, for example. "Without traceability, everyone's blamed ... you could have your farm quarantined because of that, and suddenly you can't move animals."

Ferguson agreed: "PID is a quick and simple way to demonstrate a healthy herd status in the event that your premises is not involved or not within the affected radius of an animal health issue.

"This is a program that is for the collective good of all livestock sectors in the province, and it's something that is quick and easy to do," he added. "Why wouldn't you do it?"

More information can be found at saskatchewan.ca/premises-identification-program. ■