

FINAL BILL REPORT

SSB 5891

C 326 L 03
Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Identifying livestock.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Agriculture (originally sponsored by Senators Swecker and Rasmussen).

Senate Committee on Agriculture
House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources
House Committee on Appropriations

Background: The federal Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 included requirements for country of origin labeling of many food products. Guidelines were to be issued by the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture by September 30, 2002. Regulations are to be promulgated by September 30, 2004. Beef is a covered commodity. Retailers may designate that beef is of United States origin if it is from an animal that is exclusively born, raised, and slaughtered in the United States.

Work is being done by a national task force looking at ways to establish a trace-back system for animal diseases. A national identification work plan has been developed by the National Food Animal Identification Task Force.

The Livestock Identification Program maintains the official recordings of approximately 7,000 livestock brands and protects cattle and horse owners by requiring inspection of livestock and related documents at mandatory inspection points to verify ownership. Approximately seven certified feedlots are licensed and their records are audited by the Department of Agriculture to verify cattle ownership. Approximately 12 public livestock markets are licensed and bonded to ensure producers receive timely and proper payments for livestock sold through those facilities. In 2001, approximately 660,000 cattle and 14,000 horses were inspected under the program.

The program is funded entirely by fees paid by the livestock industry. Most fees are set in statute. For a number of years, there have been issues that relate to the level of service and the distribution of fees among different segments of the industry.

The last major update of the Livestock Identification Program statutes and the public livestock market statutes was in 1959. The last overall updating of the certified feed lot statutes was when it was created in 1971.

Summary: The Department of Agriculture must form an advisory committee representing all major sectors of the livestock industry to which federal country of origin labeling apply. The committee must evaluate what mechanisms may need to be established by the public sector, the private sector, or both to comply with federal country of origin labeling requirements. The advisory committee must also evaluate the National Food Animal

Identification Work Plan and any federal food safety and traceability requirements that may come as part of the homeland security measures. While livestock identification laws used for theft prevention are being updated, whether the current system will satisfy or will need to be adapted is to be considered. The Department of Agriculture holds meetings with the industry to develop an efficient strategy for addressing these issues.

Several fees that support the Livestock Identification Program are increased. These include fees paid by public livestock markets and certified feed lots, and fees for brand inspection and brand recording. The statutes for livestock identification, certified feed lots, and public livestock markets are updated.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	49	0
House	97	0

Effective: July 1, 2003
January 1, 2004 (Sections 4 and 10)