

Producers Pack Animal ID Sessions

Over 400 producers packed into a listening session on the controversial animal identification program held today in Rapid City. Over 70 producers spoke out against the program during the morning session.

Proposed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) is designed to identify and track every individual animal owned by family farm producers. In order to respond to ranchers concerns, USDA is holding a series of listening sessions on NAIS across the country. The Rapid City meeting was the ninth meeting in the series and had the largest turn-out so far.

Rancher Donley Darnell from Newcastle, Wyo., had grave concerns about the effect of NAIS on his ranch. "The cost to my operation would be a burden that it would not be able to absorb in today's market," said Darnell, a member of the Western Organization of Resource Councils, based in Billings, Mont.

Judy McCullough, Moorcroft, Wyo. rancher and President of the Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming, said, "Producers are not interested in being the guinea pigs for a huge, expensive, intrusive government experiment."

Harding County, S.D., rancher Larry Nelson, Chair of the South Dakota Stockgrowers Association, said, "There is no way to comply with 24-hour notification of comingling under ranch conditions. I commingle with some neighbors every year, and I may not know about it for a month or two. If five of the neighbor's lambs crawl into a thousand head of ewes and lambs in a large pasture, I don't know about it until I ship in the fall. Their proposed animal identification system will not work."

"I was really glad a lot of people came, said Tessy Harvey, an 11-year old ranch daughter from Valentine, Nebr.