



SISKIYOU STOCKMAN

What's New in the "Top of the State". A report for Siskiyou Livestock Producers put out by the Farm Advisors Office, Cooperative Extension of the University of California, located at 1655 South Main Street, Yreka, California 96097

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Individual Animal Identification

As the debate continues on over a national animal identification system for animal health purposes, an increasing number of producers are realizing the importance of individual animal identification for marketing and management purposes. Marketing is moving into an era where identification is critical and economically valuable in the value received when marketing of cattle. Historically cattle characteristics (attributes) important in marketing, such as carcass weight, could be easily obtained and were easily assigned to an individual (live or carcass). Increasingly, attributes such as age are important determinants of value, but are not easily obtained and require some type of animal identification carried through the animals production cycle. Often important attributes require some type of paperwork linking a production practice to specific animals. Sometimes individual identification can be short-circuited such as placing a red ear tag in animals to denote those receiving antibiotics and thus excluded from "antibiotic-free" cattle. However, if we are producing cattle with several key attributes, then we may quickly be overwhelmed with these special marks. A unique ID number for each animal can be easily associated with any number of special practices to assist with marketing while also benefiting cattle management.

Ear tags are a handy method of individual identification, however they are often not unique. A variety of reasons leads to duplication of numbers including lost tags that are replaced, worn out tags, and mis-



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communication. In contrast, electronic button identification tags (EIDs) typically are better retained due to their smaller size and placement in the ear compared to dangle ear tags, and by their manufacture no duplication will occur.

Think of EIDs as the equivalent of the VIN (vehicle identification number) for a car or truck. Traditional ear tags are the equivalent of the license plate.

Like ear tags license plates can be lost, stolen, transferred from vehicle, and are unique to states.

Usually we don't use the VIN number but refer to vehicles by the license plate.

However, when we want to be very positive about the vehicle we use the VIN number because it is unique. The same holds true for cattle and EIDs. Over time EIDs may get easier to use and we could use them all the time, but for now it is generally easier to use a traditional ear tag most of the time, but have that connection to the EID just like we have the connection between the license plate and VIN for vehicles.

Using that same vehicle analogy, if you ran a business that had numerous vehicles that were all pretty similar, all white Chevy trucks, you would want them individually identified. They would have your common number for everyday use such as the license number, or a special number you assigned. But they would also have a unique VIN number. You would simply keep track of which license plate went with which VIN, and the same is done with cattle when visual ear tags and EIDs are used.

What will it cost to move into individual identification. The supplies will run less than ½ cent per pound at sale time for the best possible

set of separate dangle ear tag and EID button, and just an ear tag would be even less. Potential market advantages from verified individual animal attributes could easily provide a financial return for the investment. The cost of

labor to apply the tags would likely be overcome by the improved communication and management in subsequent working of the cattle.

EIDs for cattle are the same as VINs for cars. Ear tags are like license plates for cattle.



Selenium Deficiency

With the most severe winter weather approaching, and for fall calving herds the breeding season, it is especially critical that producers verify the selenium status of their cattle.

Not only is selenium

important as it relates to white muscle disease but it also improves feed efficiency and overall health through immune system function.

Working with your veterinarian you can check selenium status with blood samples. Usually about 10 samples from a single management group is adequate. In Siskiyou County, most cattle that are not supplemented with selenium will be deficient, but a blood sample is the only absolute method to determine status. You can find history results at this web site:

<http://animalscience.ucdavis.edu/MineralProject/>

Sampling results have shown that supplements containing 20 to 30 ppm selenium are insufficient to adequately increase blood selenium levels. If you are feeding a trace mineral salt and the level of selenium is about 20 to 30 ppm (9-13 mg/lb), then you should be suspicious that your cattle are still deficient. A blood sample can confirm their status.

Additional methods to provide supplemental selenium include solid boluses that are given orally and are retained in the rumen. These are

available from the California Cattlemen’s Association in Sacramento, CA (916-444-0845). Injectable selenium is also available to boost selenium levels. In cows, injectable selenium is typically provided at least at the start of the breeding and calving season. For growing cattle, injections of supplemental selenium may be required every 60 to 90 days.

With the high cost of hay and the difficult weather approaching, it pays to make sure your cattle are not selenium deficient. Find out what you are feeding if you are using a trace mineral salt.

Special Feeder Sale

The special feeder sale to assist with marketing of Siskiyou County calves is set for Friday, January 5 at the Cottonwood Auction Yard. There are a now a number of methods to market cattle but the special feeder sale continues to provide a unique local opportunity for local cattle. The local cattlemen’s association will continue to assist with the sale as it is their primary fund raising event. Directors of the Association will be contacting you or you may contact them. For more information or to

arrange transportation you can contact: JT Martin, 459-5942; Jack Cowley, 459-5506, Stan Sears, 459-3829; Cliff Munson, 467-3403; Scott Thackeray, 468-2684; Joe Sammis, 397-3456; or Tom Nielsen, 435-2262. While the sale specializes in feeder cattle, they can accommodate marketing of all other cattle including cows at the special sale. This is an opportunity for producers with smaller groups as well as larger ones, to capitalize on a big sale.

Red Books Available

The attached order form can be used to get your "Red Book". Order now while supplies last. Red Books may serve as a tool to help with age or process verification as well as other types of attribute verification. This type of verification has not been clearly defined and there is no universal method to verify age and processes. However, the Red Books may serve as documentation that could help with the verification process.

Order Form for Red Pocket Calendar Books

Please send me _____ books at \$4.00 each. Enclosed is a check for the total amount made payable to UC Regents. Mail books to the address below:

NAME _____
MAILING ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

(Please mail completed form and check to: Cooperative Extension, 1655 S Main St, Yreka, CA 96097

