

STATEMENT OF CHAIRWOMAN YVETTE D. CLARKE (D-NY)
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EMERGING THREATS, CYBERSECURITY, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**JOINT HEARING WITH COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE'S SUBCOMMITTEE ON LIVESTOCK, DAIRY,
POULTRY**

“Review of the National Animal Identification System”

Tuesday, May 5, 2009 -2:00 p.m.

I would like to thank the distinguished Chairman and Ranking Member of this Subcommittee for inviting the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity and Science and Technology to share the gavel on this very important topic today.

It is extremely timely and appropriate in light of the recent national concerns regarding outbreaks of pandemic diseases and illnesses, that we look at our current animal agri-defense measures to ensure we have the appropriate infrastructure in place to mitigate risks. The potential for those who want to do harm to us and decide to use the animal agriculture industry to carry out their ill-gotten plans is very real.

It is clear that animal identification is and should be a tool of U.S. Department of Agriculture. The USDA is certainly the appropriate and capable federal agency for safeguarding, preventing, controlling and monitoring animal health.

However, the Department of Homeland Security is responsible for coordinating interagency efforts to address national animal disease outbreaks. In the event of a national catastrophe, DHS must be able to communicate with an effective and informed Department of Agriculture that can rapidly identify diseased and exposed animals.

Our Committee's assessment of this issue is that in the event of such an outbreak, it is essential that we have a functioning system in place to allow for the immediate identification and assessment of the problems. The ultimate goal is to create a national system of traceability, and animal ID is a key component of this.

I want to stress that our ability to effectively assess and respond to an animal disease outbreak remains limited until we have a functioning animal id system in place. This issue requires our urgent attention.

I am particularly concerned that at this point, it appears that we can only identify and trace about 35% of our U.S. livestock and poultry premises.

In order to respond quickly and effectively to an animal disease event, animal health officials need to be able to accurately identify infected and non-infected animals, where they are located, when they were there, and what other animals might have been exposed.

Our inability to rapidly and accurately trace diseased and exposed animals increases the likely spread of disease, and hinders our ability to adequately respond to the threat.

USDA must take the appropriate steps now to implement a biosecurity system for livestock. In USDA's zeal to promote animal health and safety, it is critical that they are just as vigilant in stressing animal agriculture defense and security. The first step in this process is the legitimate establishment of an animal identification system.

It is also important that the livestock industry fully participate in the animal identification system in order for it to be truly effective.