



For Immediate Release

Cattle Tracking Technology has Implications for Age-Verification and Market Access

November 18, 2005 (Campbellford, ON) – Ontario cattle industry members are excited about the implications of a pilot cattle sale, held today. The sale was the first of its kind in this province to operate using Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology – equipment that could automate the collection of data from tags, offering traceability options to buyers of feeder calves.

RFID tags were preceded by bar-coded ear tags, which have been used in cattle identification for a number of years. Now, bar-coded tags are being phased out in the Canadian cattle identification program by 2006, to be replaced by the RFID tags. RFID will help the industry in its goal of 100% age-verification and traceability in cattle, but it gives sales barns an easier way to read tag numbers for tracking purposes. Bar-coded tags were hard to scan when they were dirty, but RFID technology means tags can be read from within a few feet. Dan Ferguson is Coordinator of the Quality Starts Here – Verified Beef Production (QSH-VBP) program, with the Ontario Cattlemen's Association.

"This pilot is a real test of the technology that will bring all industry players together to cooperatively explore and develop the RFID capabilities in cattle."

Jim McComb, representing Quinte County Cattlemen's Association, and a proactive producer group wanting to provide age-verified animals to their customers, first brought the idea to the people he knew could help.

"Jim asked us if we could help [D.H. Hickson Limited \(Hoard's Station Sales Barn\)](#) to incorporate RFID technology into our existing auction barn software package to allow for traceability from producer to successive owners," says Rod Turner, CEO of Ag2Networks Limited, a company which specializes in custom software application and, in particular, auction software. "Working with Allflex, we were able to provide a suitable solution for all stakeholders. This technology has great potential and we're enthusiastic about its future in the cattle industry."

The sale, held at Hoard's Station, used RFID reader technology not yet widely used within the province's cattle industry. The RFID reader technology in place is a panel reader that can be attached to the side of an alleyway. Placement of the readers in the auction environment is critical for optimum effectiveness.

When cattle pass within a few feet, the reader can pick up the number programmed within the tag. That data can then be referenced to a database, maintained by the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency, that holds age-verification information, and it can be made available to the buyers via printed age certificates.

For the system to work, the cow/calf producer must enter calf birth dates or birth ranges corresponding to a data number. Dave Denure owns and operates Hoard's Auction market, and has embraced Age-Verification and traceability technology since its first introduction to the industry. His wife, Kim, runs sale administration.

"With the positive results that came out of this first pilot, we're keen to run another sale, with more cattle," she says. "But this really starts with the cow/calf farmer. We will rely on them to age-verify their calves."

Tamara Fernandes is Traceability Coordinator with the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and has been involved with the organization of the pilot.

"I'm pleased to be working with such a progressive group that recognizes the added value in age-verification and traceability systems that will help us to meet export market requirements."

The Ontario Cattlemen's Association has supported the pilot because of its obvious link to the QSH-VBP program, which encourages complete record-keeping on-farm, and because of the potential benefit of age-verification for Ontario producers.

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