

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6109

As Reported by House Committee On:
Agriculture & Natural Resources

Title: An act relating to animal identification systems.

Brief Description: Establishing a system of animal identification.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Agriculture (originally sponsored by Senators Jacobsen, Swecker, Rasmussen, Oke, Esser, McAuliffe and Spanel; by request of Department of Agriculture).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Agriculture & Natural Resources: 2/20/04, 2/24/04 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)

- Authorizes state rules and agreements for meeting federal requirements for animal identification.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Linville, Chair; Rockefeller, Vice Chair; Schoesler, Ranking Minority Member; Holmquist, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Kristiansen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Chandler, Eickmeyer, Grant, Hunt, McDermott, Orcutt, Quall and Sump.

Staff: Kenneth Hirst (786-7105).

Background:

The state's livestock identification program and laws are administered by the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). Among its provisions, legislation enacted last year increased the fees charged to fund the program and identified the evidence of ownership that must accompany cattle or horses when they are moved. The 2003 legislation also directed the WSDA to form an advisory committee to: evaluate mechanisms that may need to be established by the public and the private sectors to

comply with federal country-of-origin labeling requirements; evaluate any requirements that may be placed on the meat products industry by federal food safety and traceability requirements as part of homeland security measures; and review the national identification work plan developed by a task force advising the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The WSDA must submit a written report of the findings and conclusion of the advisory committee by December 1, 2005.

Under the livestock identification laws, the Director of the WSDA (Director) has also appointed a six-member Livestock Identification Advisory Board representing beef producers, public livestock market operators, horse owners, dairy farmers, cattle feeders, and meat processors. The board is to provide advice to the Director regarding livestock identification programs and inspection fees and related licensing fees.

On December 30, 2003, U. S. Secretary of Agriculture Ann M. Veneman announced that the USDA would begin the implementation of a verifiable system of national animal identification.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The Director of the WSDA may adopt rules: to support the agriculture industry in meeting federal requirements for the country-of-origin labeling of meat; and to implement federal requirements for animal identification needed to trace the source of livestock for disease control and response purposes. In doing so, the Director may cooperate with and enter into agreements with other states and agencies of the federal government. In carrying out these authorities, the Director must consult with the Livestock Identification Advisory Board.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill:

The amendment: expressly refers to the authority of the Director to adopt rules implementing federal trace-back requirements; removes a restriction that the WSDA's requirements regarding country-of-origin labeling be substantially consistent with and not exceed federal requirements; and requires the Director to consult with the Livestock Identification Advisory Board when conducting any activities authorized by the bill.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available on original bill.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (1) The bill allows the state to respond to a national animal identification system. (2) The national identification system for tracing the origin of animals and for the country-of-origin labeling of meat products are the same. We are hoping the federal requirements will allow the states to fill in the details of the system. (3) The federal country-of-origin labeling program has been delayed. There are some kinks to be worked out in that program.

Testimony Against: None.

Persons Testifying: Leslie Emerick, Washington State Department of Agriculture; Jay Gordon, Washington State Dairy Federation; Heather Hansen, Washington Cattle Feeders Association; and Neil Kayser, Washington Cattlemen's Association.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.