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TRACING CATTLE

Ranchers launch, with USDA help, national drive to follow cows electronically



By DON JENKINS
Capital Press

A drive started by Kansas cattlemen to electronically track U.S. cattle has spread to the Northwest, pitching itself to sometimes skeptical ranchers as an industry-led and voluntary alternative to government monitoring.

US Cattle Trace Inc. leaders envision building a nationwide, privately owned database of cattle movements, from birth to slaughter. If a disease breaks out, information could be parceled out to state veterinarians to identify and quarantine exposed cattle, according to organizers.

The database grows as beef cows with ultra-high frequency tags are scanned as they move in and out of livestock markets and feedlots associated with Cattle Trace in 10 states, including several feedlots in southeast Washington and northeast Oregon owned by Beef Northwest Feeders.

Cattle Trace's board chairman, Brandon Depenbusch, a Kansas feedlot executive, said the COVID-19 global pandemic underscores the importance of preparing to limit a financially crippling health calamity.

"I can't imagine a time that highlights the need for disease traceability more than now, with the coronavirus," he said. "I hope as an industry we can at some point say, 'Oh, goodness, what can learn from this?'"



Brandon Depenbusch

Plans similar

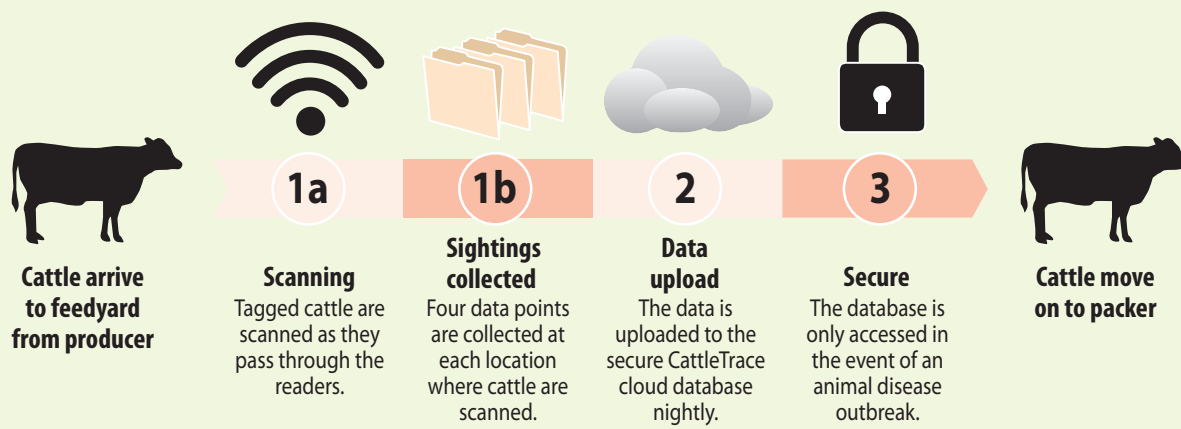
Cattle Trace's ambitions to tag and scan cows are similar to a now-suspended plan by the USDA to prod ranchers into affixing radio-frequency identification tags on calves, phasing out metal tags.

The plan was scheduled to take full effect in 2023, but was opposed

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CattleTrace data collection process explained

Formally established in 2018, U.S. CattleTrace is a not-for-profit corporation whose goal is to develop a national disease traceability system for livestock. Ultra High Frequency Radio-Frequency Identification (UHF RFID) technology allows stakeholders to track livestock and manage disease outbreak in the supply chain.



Source: U.S. CattleTrace

Alan Kenaga/For the Capital Press

Cattle Trace
Kansas-based U.S. Cattle Trace envisions a national database that tracks U.S. cattle with ultra-high frequency tags.

Coronavirus shearing sheep industry

By CAROL RYAN DUMAS
Capital Press

Demand for lamb, wool and pelts is tanking in response to the coronavirus pandemic, industry representatives say, and prices are following suit.

It's having a tremendous impact on the industry, said John Noh, president of Idaho Wool Growers Association and a board member of the American Sheep Industry Association.

Wool has become unsaleable because the agency in New Zealand that does commercial testing of U.S. wool has closed due to coronavirus. Trade to major wool buyers in Italy and China has shut down, as has the pelt trade to primary markets in Turkey, China and Russia. Some trade was shut down to a degree before coronavirus, but it's even worse now, he said.

A large portion of the lamb market is restaurants and cruise ships, and they aren't operating. The timing is particularly difficult, as Easter is a main event for lamb sales. Grocery trade is up, but that's for the lesser cuts of shoulder and ground meat. Sales of the more expensive middle meats are at a standstill, he said.

On top of that, the second-largest U.S. lamb packer, Mountain States



Capital Press File

A band of sheep grazes in the Boise foothills. The coronavirus outbreak has hurt the markets for lamb and wool.

Rosen, filed for bankruptcy, and its kill rate is way down.

In addition, Pendleton Woolen Mills has temporarily shut down its operations, he said.

"It's about as rough as I've seen it in my 30 years," he said.

Mountain States Rosen filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection on March 19 with the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the District of Wyoming, citing lost sales due to the COVID-19 pandemic, according to court documents. Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Code protects a company from the threat of creditors' lawsuits

while it reorganizes its finances.

A spokesman for Pendleton Woolen Mills said the company closed its mills in Washougal, Wash., and Pendleton, Ore., after an employee at the Washougal mill tested positive for COVID-19. The mills are scheduled to reopen April 3.

Prices paid to producers are rapidly falling. Fat lambs, which were selling for \$1.45 to \$1.50 a pound, are now as low as \$1.25 — "if you can find somebody who will buy them," Noh said.

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Hammonds may face competition for grazing allotments

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI
Capital Press

Neighboring cattle producers can apply to compete for access to federal grazing allotments that Oregon's Hammond Ranches lost in a court decision last year.

However, those applications will be put on hold if Hammond Ranches decides to continue with an administrative challenge against the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

Ranchers have until April 14 to apply to graze livestock on the four allotments, which include more than 26,000 federal acres, while Hammond Ranches must decide by that time whether to pursue its appeal — or also submit an application for a new grazing permit.

Steven Hammond, co-owner of the ranch, said he's not sure whether other cattlemen will seek to compete for the grazing allotments, which his family has relied upon for decades.

Hammond said he's also undecided about which procedural action to take and will be consulting with his attorney to "try to understand how much more complicated this process is going to get."

Hammond and his father, Dwight, are well-known in the ranching community for their legal battles with the federal government and environmental groups.

The two ranchers were convicted of arson for setting fire to rangelands and sent to prison in 2012. After being released, they were ordered back behind bars when the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals determined they must both serve mandatory 5-year sentences.

Demonstrations against the federal government erupted when the Hammonds returned to prison in early 2016, leading to the occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge. One protestor was

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