

Frequently Asked Questions: Livestock Cloning Supply Chain Management Program

What is the Supply Chain Management Program?

The supply chain management program will establish protocols that uniquely identify any animals produced through cloning. This program will allow for the consistent and accurate tracking of these animals throughout their lifetimes.

Why was it developed?

The program was developed so food processing companies and other food chain organizations can ensure the products they market do not include animals born through the use of cloning technology. This program was developed to specifically address marketing concerns and issues, as there are no safety problems with food derived from animals produced through cloning. Safety has been confirmed through a rigorous assessment by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and two previous reports by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS).

What are the benefits of the system?

The system provides choices. It is neither a health nor a safety program. The system is a proactive assurance, similar to other process-based systems used in our food system, to provide consumer choice and food branding.

Who developed it?

The system has been developed over the last year by the leading U.S. livestock cloning companies (ViaGen Inc. and Trans Ova Genetics) based on input solicited from a coalition of over twenty organizations representing every sector of the food chain. This coalition included producers and processors from the beef, dairy, and pork industry, as well as trade associations representing leading grocery store chains and food service establishments.

How will it work?

The program works through a five-component approach: Education, identification, a national clone registry, affidavits, and incentives. Cloning companies will give each animal produced through cloning technology a unique identification (ID). Radio frequency identification (RFID) ear tags that are National Animal Identification System (NAIS)-compliant, will be entered into a registry, thus allowing verification by the livestock auction market or packer/processor.

After educating the owner about cloning and the Supply Chain Management Program, the cloning company will contract to produce the animals. The owner will sign an affidavit committing to proper marketing or disposal of the animal or, in the case of dairy cattle,

proper marketing of its milk. The owner will be refunded an incentive deposit previously paid to the cloning company when they notify the company of death (verified by veterinarian), consumption by owner (verified by meat locker) or sale to a packer/processor who accepts livestock produced through cloning (verified by signed statement from packer/processor). The incentive deposit will be based on a value higher than the current market value for a similar animal.

How does the dairy program work?

The dairy program will operate using the same five components of the program: Client education, affidavits, identification, queries to the clone registry, and the incentive program. Dairy marketers will have the ability to query the registry to identify the possible presence of cloned cattle. If marketers intend to restrict milk from clones from their supply, the use of the registry and owner affidavits will help them validate any labeling claims they make.

When will it start?

The system is being put in place now and should be ready to implement as soon as the final risk assessment is released by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

How does this work with the USDA National Animal Identification System (NAIS)?

The Supply Chain Management Program is utilizing ear tags that USDA has approved and are NAIS compliant. By utilizing this RFID tag and registry now, the program can be incorporated into the NAIS in the future.

What about the animals produced through cloning already in the marketplace?

There less than 600 animals produced through cloning technology alive in the United States, as compared to the entire livestock population of tens of millions. The cloning companies will inform past clients that they should check with food processors to see if animals will be accepted.

What are clones, anyway?

Cloning is an assisted reproductive technology allowing livestock breeders a means to create genetic twins of their best animals. This breeding technique does not change the genetic make-up of the animal.

What about the offspring of animals produced through cloning?

The offspring of cloned animals are reproduced by the conventional mating of two parents; therefore, they are not themselves clones.

What is cloning used for?

Cloning technology is used to create a genetic twin of an existing superior animal, thus removing the guesswork from breeding. Cloning only will be used to make twins of the most genetically elite, individual livestock for use in breeding programs. Animals produced through cloning then can be used to breed founder sires and dams in order to improve the herd and overall breed population.

Is it safe to eat food derived from clones?

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration analyzed more than 400 peer-reviewed scientific studies on cloning, encompassing years of safety data and several generations and large families of livestock. The FDA concluded: "The current weight of evidence suggests that there are no biological reasons to indicate that consumption of edible products from the clones of cattle, pigs, sheep or goats poses a greater risk than consumption of those products from their non-clone counterparts."

The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) also scrutinized numerous studies, publishing in-depth reviews in 2002 and 2004. The NAS concluded that "there is no scientific evidence that cloning is associated with any unintended compositional change that results in an unintended health consequence in humans" and pointed out that consumers would get better food because clones have "increased genetic merit for increased food production, disease resistance and reproductive efficiency".

In addition, in March, 2007, a group of over 300 distinguished scientists worldwide released a statement in support of the FDA's draft risk assessment.

The scientific consensus is clear – the food derived from clones and their offspring is as safe as any other food.