Pioneering Technology to advance Scottish cattle traceability to be unveiled

A revolutionary electronic identification (EID) system to track and monitor Scotland's cattle herd is being showcased to the farming industry from this autumn. The system enables the tracking of Scottish cattle throughout their entire life and evidences the provenance of Scotch Beef.

The proposed new system uses advanced Ultra High Frequency (UHF) scanning technology bringing greater benefits in its use and flexibility combined with Low Frequency technology which is more rigid and inflexible.   The ScotEID database will bring together all farm livestock movement records within one central source and will lead to the removal of paper passports.

ScotEID, which manages the database for recording animal movements in Scotland, has designed and developed the pioneering new recording system for the Scottish herd.

It will incorporate births, deaths and movements of cattle, replacing the British Cattle Movement Service's (BCMS) Cattle Tracing System (CTS) for Scottish cattle keepers and provide an online line service and with the introduction of bovine EID and an Online Herd Register.

The new system embeds data experience from research and development and current data management by ScotEID, with the use of UHF technology bringing a number of new benefits. Not only will it be straightforward to use, but it will improve the speed and accuracy of traceability, according to Bob Yuill, director of ScotEID.

Mr Yuill says: "When the system is adopted in Scotland, then all movements to and from markets and to abattoirs will be recorded using UHF technology which is good from both a health and safety perspective but also for ease of use.
"Using electronic ID tags, electronic reading and electronic data transfer will reduce the administration burden and recording errors for the livestock sector and be safer in terms of requiring close handling of cattle. It will also help to future-proof the recording process."

The Scottish industry set out proposals in June 2017 for a voluntary industry led pilot leading with bovine EID and input from stakeholders in the farming industry is an important part of preparing for the move to cattle EID and a series of roadshows is being planned, taking place during the Autumn and winter months across Scotland. Supporting the economic growth of an important sector and recognition of the importance of testing technologies, researching and developing systems and in particular ensuring cattle keepers are fully engaged in advance of the introduction of legislation for bovine EID is key to its successful roll out in Scotland.

To register interest, or request an invitation to a roadshow in your area, please contact the ScotEID Information Centre on 01466 794323 or email help@ScotEID.com
The Scottish industry proposals for the roll out of EID will be still subject to industry consultation and Scottish Government Regulation, but when agreed, will bring about the biggest transformation in the system in almost 30 years.

Following industry consultation, the Scottish timeline will see all new-born calves EID tagged as the first step, with discussions continuing about how to roll the system out to the rest of the national herd.

It is likely that all cattle leaving a holding will require EID tags within two years of the first calves being tagged. That being the case only adults will require retagging at that point.

The BCMS CTS service has supported cattle recording in Scotland, England and Wales since going live on 28 September 1998 in order to meet EU legislation, since which time the cattle industry has experienced unprecedented changes. Over the same period there have been significant advances in technology and the development of the internet to support innovative processes of tracing whole-life movement in real time.

Mr Yuill adds: "The existing CTS systems have reached the end of their viable operating lives and can no longer efficiently be sustained or accommodate the changes that are required for cattle EID.

"Ultra High Frequency (UHF) technology is being used, and supported by industry leaders, because of the benefits it brings with regards to being user-friendly and offering benefits in terms of health and safety. We will be able to explain in more detail, and answer questions that interested parties may have, during our roadshow events."

Scotland is rightly proud of its traceability system which helps to ensure world class animal health, welfare and farm standards all of which mean that Scotch Beef has an enviable position as a leading brand.

The continuing development of ScotEID will conclude with it being a whole life, multi species system for all farm livestock in Scotland. The technology will bring benefits through multi-animal scanning capabilities at marts and slaughterhouses.