

## **Sample letter: Personalize it to make the greatest impact!**

To find out who your U.S. Representative and Senators are, go to [www.congress.org/congressorg/home/](http://www.congress.org/congressorg/home/) and enter your zip code in the box on the left-hand side. Send a copy of your letter to your Representative and to both Senators from your state. Please also send copies to the chair and ranking minority members of the Senate and House Agriculture Committees. Address it to “Chairman” or “Minority Leader” and send to the addresses below.

House Agriculture Committee (majority)  
House Committee on Agriculture  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
Phone: 202-225-2171  
Fax: 202-225-0917  
Email: [agriculture@mail.house.gov](mailto:agriculture@mail.house.gov)

House Agriculture Committee (minority)  
Committee on Agriculture  
1305 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
Phone: (202) 225-0317

Senate Agriculture Committee (majority and minority - please specify in envelope address)  
Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition & Forestry  
Room SR-328A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC. 20510-6000  
Phone: 202-224-2035

### **Sample letter**

Dear Representative (or Senator) \_\_\_\_\_:

I am a \_\_\_\_\_ (*farmer, consumer, horse owner, etc. Tell them just a couple of sentences about yourself*). I am writing to ask you to stop the US Department of Agriculture from continuing to implement the National Animal Identification System (“NAIS”).

Agriculture Secretary Johanns recently described the NAIS as “one of the largest systemic changes ever faced by the livestock industry.” But the Senate has held only one hearing, in 2004, on the topic, and the House of Representatives has yet to hold a single hearing. At the Senate hearing, many questions were raised about both the principle and feasibility of the program, yet the USDA has failed to address many of the concerns raised by the Senators. Despite the lack of Congressional oversight and unanswered questions, USDA has spent over \$84 million implementing this program, which will have a significant impact on millions of Americans as well as our food supply. To add insult to injury, the Congress has yet to pass any legislation specifically authorizing NAIS. And the USDA has not issued nor does it plan to issue any regulations on the program.

While the USDA has announced that the program is voluntary at the federal level, it is continuing to provide grants to the states to implement NAIS. Specifically, USDA is funding **mandatory** implementation in several states. Further, the USDA's stated goal is to have 100% participation by 2009, and the cooperative agreements with states are conditioned on reaching specific goals. In other words, the agency intends to **require every person who owns animals** to comply with this burdensome program, acting indirectly through state programs.

If it is made mandatory, the USDA's plan for NAIS would require the following:

1. Premises Registration: Every person who owns or manages locations where livestock and poultry are handled will have to register in a government database, or a private database that the government can access. This includes people who own even one horse, chicken, goat, sheep, cow, pig, deer, or elk.
2. Animal Identification: Every animal will be assigned a unique 15-digit number by the government when they are moved from their herd of origin or are commingled with other animals. Each animal will need to be permanently identified. For most species, the proposal is to require radio frequency identification tags or microchips, rather than the less expensive, traditional forms of physical tagging. While the USDA claims that poultry and swine will get "group numbers," most small farmers and companion-animal owners do not keep animals in ways that would qualify.
3. Animal Tracking: The owner must report, within 24 hours, every time an animal is tagged or a tag is lost; every death or slaughter; every missing animal; and "commingling" events, including public and private sales, shows, and exhibitions.

*{Discuss your experience with NAIS in your state, and your concerns about your life under NAIS. If you have seen or heard of abuses of the NAIS program, especially fraud or coercion in signing people up for premises registration, mention that.}*

The NAIS represents an unprecedented expansion of the government bureaucracy into people's private lives and infringes on our property and privacy rights. The program will impose heavy monetary and logistical burdens on livestock owners, driving many small and medium-size farmers and ranchers out of business. These burdens will also discourage people from owning livestock, such as horses, as companion animals. The economic effects will be wide-reaching. Cost estimates for NAIS range into the hundreds of millions of dollars that the livestock owner will have to pay, either out-of-pocket or by the taxpayer. At the same time, the NAIS will not protect animal health or food safety.

Congress needs to stop the USDA from continuing to implement the NAIS. I ask that you call for hearings into this issue, one of the "largest systemic changes" to ever face agriculture in the United States.

I look forward to your written response.

Sincerely,

Name

Address

City, State Zip Code

Phone Number

E-mail address if you have one