

Livestock Haulers Fined for RFID Violations

The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (MDARD) has levied over \$22,000 in fines against two Michigan livestock dealers who illegally moved calves without official Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags. All cattle are required to bear RFID tags in the State of Michigan before they are moved from any property. The dealers were also fined for failure to keep adequate records and dealing in livestock without a license,

violations of the Livestock Dealers Act (Act 284 of 1937, as amended), and the Animal Industry Act (Act 466 of 1988, as amended) which were established to protect both the cattle industry as well as the consumer.

“We cannot let the actions of two bad actors undermine the integrity of cattle traceability in Michigan,” said Al Rodriguez, MDARD’s Animal Industry Division Compliance Officer. “While these findings are disappointing, they reinforce our

efforts to make sure all Michigan livestock farmers are in compliance with the RFID law.”

Michigan’s cattle industry enthusiastically embraced the RFID program in 2007, making the state the national leader in farm-to-fork traceability. In February of 2013, a dairy herd in Saginaw County was diagnosed with bovine TB. MDARD trace investigators discovered the farm owner sold, and two dealers bought, calves without the required RFID tags.

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An animal disease investigation includes tracking cattle sold from a bovine TB positive farm. With an RFID tag, easily scanned with an electronic reader, it only takes a day or two to find the animals. But this investigation took over four months, countless additional contacts, and reviews of books and sales receipts to find the animals – simply because these people did not comply with the law. “Without RFID, it’s difficult to confirm we are testing the correct animals, so instead of one steer, an entire herd needs to be tested – that’s a huge impact on our cattle farmers,” Rodriquez said.

The Gratiot County livestock dealer waived his rights to a formal hearing and agreed to have his Livestock Dealer’s License revoked for the remainder of 2013, plus two additional years for improper record keeping. He was assessed a fine of \$11,325 for movement of approximately 53 calves without bearing official RFID. A second livestock dealer waived his rights to a formal hearing and received a fine of \$11,320 for the movement of cattle without official RFID tags from a premises.

“MDARD is continually informing the cattle industry of the RFID requirement, and plans on increasing livestock movement enforcement efforts to boost compliance,” Rodriquez said. For more information on animal ID visit USDA’s Animal Traceability Final Rule.



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