



# The Toughest ID Quiz Ever

By Curt Olson

**A** lot is written about the importance of animal ID and premises registration. Properly used, both can help make you money. This short quiz may help you remember what you meant to do, or confirm that you've already finished that chore.

**1. You've registered your premises.** (190 points)

- yes  
 no

**2. What's the best reason to identify your cattle?**

**Rank in order of importance.** (5 points)

- Dad did it  
 Production records  
 Health records  
 Marketing requirements  
 Theft protection

**3. Which ID method works the best?** (10 points)

- Hot iron brand  
 Freeze brand  
 Tattoo  
 Ear tag  
 Electronic ID

**4. Alliances often require which form of ID?** (5 points)

- Whatever you use  
 Electronic ID  
 Ear tag and electronic ID  
 Signed affidavit and any permanent ID form  
 Other

**5. Export verification programs require which ID form?**

- None (10 points)  
 Electronic  
 Ear tag  
 Tattoo  
 Other

**6. Targeted, end-product marketing programs want ID that will do which of the following?** (10 points)

- Source and age verify  
 Supply health records  
 Allow trace back  
 Confirm production practices  
 Verify organic or natural beef

**7. Process verified programs don't require any ID.**

(10 points)

- True  
 False

**Your score**

- 0-10 – whispers in class  
11-20 – shows improvement  
21-30 – works independently  
31-40 – good, consistent work  
41-50 – demonstrates leadership  
51-240 – dinner's on you

**Answers**

1. Hopefully you have registered your premises. Score the points if you have. It's voluntary and doesn't require you to participate in any other programs. Bruce Knight, USDA under secretary of Agricultural and Marketing Service and the man in charge of premises ID, says the program will not become mandatory. After the December 2003 BSE case discovered in the United States, USDA saw a need for a program to facilitate trace back efforts. The goal of premises ID is to conduct trace back within 48 hours of a disease outbreak. The poultry industry can do it. The hog industry will be able to do so within a year. Knight said a recent trace-back effort on bovine tuberculosis took 199 days. Which choice better protects your herd if there is an outbreak of a contagious disease? For premises registration information, go to [www.usda.gov/nais](http://www.usda.gov/nais).

2. Every producer has his own reasons for supplying his herd with animal ID. Each reason is valid. The important thing is that you use some system. Your partners in the marketing chain will let you know if you have what they want. They may do this by discounting your cattle if they don't have the ID the market wants. They also may tell you what they need to help you pursue premiums. One point per answer.

3. Each producer has his own reasons for using the ID system he does, and each is correct. If you chose one, collect the points. It pays to use what your customers want. If you brand, protect the hide value as that is part of what you get paid for.

4. You need to check with each alliance. The ID requirements can change from one to the next. Many require electronic ID. Some want electronic ID and an ear tag for backup in case the electronic ID falls out. Others may accept multiple ID forms, but you have to know what those are before you try to market this way. If

*Continued on Page 16*



*Continued from Page 14*

you are going to market through an alliance, you need to pick a system where you can reasonably hit the production goals. One point per answer, if you know there's a market for it.

5. You need to check with the specific export verification program through which you wish to market. They are not the same and one size does not fit all. Each is free to set its own guidelines. The key to this is age and source verification. If your cattle can meet the requirements, there may be a premium and electronic ID is favored in some because it is easier to pass information along the chain of ownership. Even without ID, a carcass that passes age verification requirements can be eligible for export in some cases, but the cattleman won't receive a direct payment for it without supplying the prerequisite information, which means the proper ID is needed. Two points for each right answer that matches a program.

6. ID can facilitate all these requests, depending on the structure of the particular program. Consumers are seeking transparency in the farm to fork process, and traceability increasingly is a factor in their purchase decision. Traceability starts with premises ID. After that, it is up to you to choose the ID form that works for you and your customers. Two points per answer.

7. This could be true, but likely isn't in other cases. In these programs, specific production practices that may be part of a marketing claim — hormone free, grass fed, etc. — are verified. As most of this ends up in a branded program where premiums are available, there are requirements on chain participants. This often includes specific ID requirements to facilitate traceability, and perhaps source and age requirements. If you said true, you must know of a program to collect the points.

## Branding Done Right

By Joe Snyder

Branding livestock for identification purposes has been around at least since Egyptians branded their oxen with hieroglyphics around 2,700 B.C. It remains a highly visible, relatively easily administered, theft-deterrent and identification form. Besides hot iron branding, cattlemen sometimes use freeze branding, tattoos, earmarking, ear tagging and radio frequency identification.

Producers just getting started will want to familiarize themselves with the laws in their state regarding brands, brand registration and brand inspections.

While branding is practical to cattle management, cattlemen should always strive to handle cattle in a low stress and humane manner, says NCBA Vice President of Producer Education G. Ashby Green, DVM. "Hot iron branding should be accomplished quickly, expertly and with the proper equipment," he says.

Improperly placed hot brands can result in damage to the hide and diminished profits. Beef Quality Assurance guidelines encourage

branding on the butt or hip at all times. Keep the brand design simple and as small as possible while still achieving clear identification.

Cattle with extremely long hair should be clipped first. The animal should be properly restrained so that it cannot move. This will minimize stress for the animal and keep the brand from smudging.

The temperature of a branding iron should be appropriate — blue hot as opposed to red hot. Too hot an iron can burn the animal unnecessarily, as well as making the brand hard to identify. Too cool an iron can create a brand that doesn't last. How long the iron is applied depends on such things as age of the animal and hair cover, but an iron at the right temperature should do the job in three to five seconds. Use a slight rocking motion with the iron.

A properly applied brand should be a copper bronze color, about the color of saddle leather. Afterwards, apply an oil to the area to promote

healing and a better brand impression on the hide, says NCBA Quality Assurance Director Ryan Ruppert.

Do not attempt to brand animals that are damp or wet and don't brand over an existing brand. Feeder cattle should not be re-branded when entering a feedlot unless required by law. Beef Quality Assurance guidelines strongly discourage wattling, ear splitting and other surgical alterations for identification (ear notching may be used).

Freeze branding doesn't damage the hide as much as hot branding. The technique involves an iron that has been chilled with a coolant like dry ice or liquid nitrogen. Instead of producing a scar, the freeze brand alters hair cells, causing the hair to grow white where branded.

