

# 2020

## Electronic Cattle Transaction Reporting System

### Annual Report to the Legislature



*As Required by RCW 16.57.450*

**July 2020**



Washington  
State Department of  
Agriculture

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## **Executive Summary**

Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) continues to strengthen and modernize our state's animal disease tracking capabilities through the expansion of our electronic cattle transaction reporting (ECTR) system. Since the expanded (ECTR) system launched on November 19, 2019, Washington's, 65 registered users conducted 121 transactions. These transactions include 14 out-of-state movements and 107 change-of-ownership reports involving 775 head of cattle.

Audits of these transactions indicate compliance with all reporting requirements. No proof of ownership has been submitted from a producer reporting cattle branded with another's brand.

WSDA continues to promote and expand the ECTR system as a cost-effective way for producers to report cattle movement and ownership changes and to strengthen our state's disease traceability system.

## **Background**

During the 2015 legislative session, the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) introduced and successfully passed Senate Bill 5733. On May 7, 2015, Governor Inslee signed into law SB 5733 authorizing the Director of WSDA to establish an electronic cattle transaction reporting system as a mechanism for reporting in-state private transactions involving unbranded dairy cattle to the department. The law further authorized the director to adopt by rule conditions of licensure, use and fees to support the reporting system.

The signing of SB 5733 signaled a significant milestone in a multi-year, collaborative effort with the Washington State Dairy Federation to create an alternative reporting system to replace the "15-Head Exemption," which expired January 1, 2016. Until January 1, 2016, this exemption allowed for the private sale of 15 head or less of unbranded dairy breed females without a livestock inspection. The exemption was eliminated to strengthen and improve Washington's Animal Disease Traceability (ADT) system, which allows WSDA to quickly track the movement of any livestock in the event of an animal disease outbreak. The goal is to limit the spread of the disease and protect the livestock industry.

The system that was created for the dairy industry, known as "ECTR", was designed to provide dairy producers a flexible and easy-to-use system to report private transactions of unbranded

dairy cattle via the web, rather than obtaining a WSDA livestock inspection. The system cost approximately \$15,000 to create and requires an annual maintenance cost of up to \$1,500 if the system is in use.

In anticipation of the ECTR legislation, the department began collaborating with the Washington State Dairy Federation and other ADT work group members in March of 2014 to develop the purpose and scope of the ECTR system. Members of the ADT work group include representatives from:

- AgriBeef Company
- Cattle Producers of Washington
- The Washington Cattle Feeders Association
- The Washington Cattlemen's Association
- The Washington State Dairy Federation
- The Washington State Farm Bureau
- The WSDA Livestock Identification Advisory Committee

WSDA completed the development of ECTR in January 2016, making the system available to all Washington licensed dairy producers.

April 2019, the Washington State Legislature passed engrossed substitute senate bill 5959 (ESSB 5959), intended to restore financial solvency to the Livestock Identification Program. The Livestock Identification Program was facing a significant budget shortfall due to reduction in brands being recorded, increased administrative costs, ever-increasing costs of doing business, and program revenues were falling.

Through the legislative process and working with our industry partners, it was recognized that there was a need to increase the use of official individual electronic identification to advance animal disease traceability, safeguard food safety, promote international trade, and have long-term economic viability of the livestock industry. This legislation expanded the ECTR system for both beef and dairy cattle producers to use to report out of state movement and change of ownership transactions.

July 28, 2019, the legislation became effective and November 19, 2019 the new ECTR system went live.

## **ADT Benefits**

Animal disease traceability or knowing where diseased and at-risk animals are, where they've been, what animals they have come in contact with, and when is very important to ensure a rapid response when adverse animal disease events take place. An efficient and accurate ADT system, and identifying animals with electronic official individual identification, can limit the economic

strain on owners and communities through shorter investigations, faster control of the disease, and fewer animals subject to quarantine or euthanasia.

For these reasons, the department remains committed to crafting a robust structure that protects our state's cattle industry, allows us to quickly trace any animal disease outbreak, and bolsters consumer confidence in Washington dairy and beef products. It is vital that all sectors of the cattle industry participate in traceability and at the level of integrity needed for a successful program and response.

All cattle reported in ECTR must have electronic official individual identification (RFID), commonly known as an "840" RFID tag. Users must submit proof of ownership documentation for all branded cattle that are reported in ECTR. This can be done using the owners' recorded Washington brand or other proof of ownership documents listed in rule.

To assist in advancing animal disease traceability and to promote the use of RFID tags, WSDA offered a promotion to producers who applied for ECTR. Producers are eligible to receive free RFID tags\*

- 40 tags and one RFID tag applicator for producers with herds of 50 head or less.
- 100 tags and one RFID tag applicator for producers with herds of more than 50 head.

ECTR allows the department to maintain traceability information that can be used in the event of a disease outbreak. It also provides producers with:

- Real-time, 24/7 electronic reporting.
- Electronic payment options (ACH/eCheck and credit card).
- Availability wherever an internet connection exists.
- Reports on transaction history.

## **ECTR Activity Status**

There was minimal use of the ECTR system from the dairy industry since it was created in 2016. Out of approximately 400 licensed dairy producers in the state, only eleven had registered to use the system, and only two had reported transactions.

Since November 19, 2019 when the ECTR system went live for dairy and beef producers to use, there have been 65 registered users and 121 transactions. These transactions include 14 out of state movements and 107 change of ownerships, involving 775 head of cattle.

The purpose of this report is to document all examinations and inspections of cattle and records of ECTR license holders performed by the department. This includes details of any actions taken by the department following the examinations and inspections. Audits were conducted on all ECTR transactions. The audits revealed that all cattle were either reported to

be branded with the owner's Washington recorded brand or unbranded. No proof of ownership has been submitted from a producer reporting cattle branded with another's brand.

## **ECTR Outreach**

WSDA has conducted extensive outreach focused on educating beef and dairy producers of the system's availability and the importance of participating in traceability. This has included:

- Submitting industry articles in July and October of 2019 and January 2020 to Washington Cattlemen's Association, Washington Cattle Feeders Association, Cattle Producers of Washington, Washington Dairy Federation, Washington State Veterinary Medical Association, and WSU Extension.
- Radio broadcast with Washington AG Network in May of 2019 to promote the use of ECTR and outline the Livestock Identification Program changes that resulted from the passage of ESSB 5959.
- A press release issued in November of 2019 to announce that WSDA was offering Washington ranchers a quicker, more cost-effective way to report cattle sales through ECTR.
- A Facebook posting in November of 2019 to notify producers that ECTR was up and running.

WSDA also updated its ECTR webpage to outline what is ECTR, the requirements to use the system, the costs associated, and the promotions available.

The Washington State Cattlemen's Association promoted ECTR via their Facebook page in March 2020.

## **Moving Forward**

The Legislature enacted Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5959 during the 2019 session. This legislation allows for the expansion of ECTR to include beef cattle in addition to dairy cattle. With this expansion, ECTR transactions can now be used as an alternative to mandatory livestock inspections designated by the Director of Agriculture. All cattle that are reported in ECTR must have an official electronic identification tag. This expansion provides all livestock producers additional options for mandatory cattle inspections and enhances our overall animal disease traceability program.