

## Brief for consultants

Project: Review of the NLIS device accreditation process

Prepared by: Integrity Systems Company Limited

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### BACKGROUND

Before being eligible to be used as official identifiers for the purposes of Australia's national livestock identification and traceability system – the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) – cattle, sheep and goat identification devices, typically ear tags, are required to be NLIS accredited.

The conduct of the NLIS device accreditation process is underpinned by three documents:

1. NLIS Standard for Radio Frequency Identification Devices
2. NLIS Sheep and Goat Standard for visual tags
3. NLIS Field Trial Protocol

The process is managed by the Integrity Systems Company (ISC) and has been operational for around 10 years. The process has provided the foundation for an objective assessment of the field performance of devices applying for NLIS accreditation, with devices assessed for retention, readability and structural integrity. Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) and animal welfare considerations are also addressed. A company applying for NLIS accreditation must satisfy requirements for the production and supply of the devices, and comply with monitoring, reporting and audit requirements.

The process typically includes an initial assessment of samples and written application, field trials conducted over three years, an audit of production and supply procedures, transponder testing, a licence agreement, and monitoring of commercial sales.

SAFEMEAT's NLIS Standards Committee is responsible for managing the assessments of the devices and making recommendations to ISC.

The NLIS Standards Committee has regularly consulted with tag manufacturers on the device accreditation process and over time has initiated a range of modifications. Examples include:

- Changes to the methodology used for statistical analysis
- The introduction of transponder testing
- Greater flexibility in the management of trials (reduced supervision at tagging, additional properties, "emergency" arrangements for alternate supervisors etc.)
- The consideration of "minor" modifications to devices.

There have also been changes at the request of industry such as the introduction of maximum sizes for tags (a proposal to change this requirement will be assessed as a part of this review).

There are also examples of proposed changes that have not been successfully implemented including the establishment of a pool of accredited independent supervisors, and the establishment of a pool of trial properties. Additionally, there have been some proposals, such as allowing in house supervision, that have not been fully considered.

ISC also wishes to ensure that the assessment process and documentation facilitates the adoption of new technologies as they emerge. The accreditation process must be robust, but also sufficiently flexible to ensure the industry can take advantage of new technologies.

#### **ABOUT THE INTEGRITY SYSTEMS COMPANY**

A wholly owned subsidiary of Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), the Integrity Systems Company – formerly NLIS Ltd – delivers the Livestock Production Assurance (LPA) program, National Vendor Declarations (NVDs) and the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS). LPA, industry's on-farm assurance program meets the stringent requirements of our export markets, providing an assurance of the safety of red meat grown by Australia's producers, while the NVD provides the platform for the transfer of information and the NLIS system supports the identification and traceability of cattle, sheep and goats through the value chain.

#### **ABOUT SAFEMEAT**

SAFEMEAT is the partnership between the red meat and livestock industry and the state and federal governments of Australia.

This partnership ensures that Australian red meat and livestock products achieve the highest standards of safety and hygiene from the farm to the consumer. SAFEMEAT initiates research and development, develops communication linkages, monitors the status of Australia's meat products, reviews standards and examines emerging issues that could have an impact on the meat and livestock industry in the future.

The NLIS Standards Committee is a SAFEMEAT Committee, and has obligations to report to SAFEMEAT on key strategic matters relating to the NLIS device accreditation process, namely recommended amendments to the NLIS RFID and Visual Standards.

## **PROJECT – REVIEW OF THE NLIS DEVICE ACCREDITATION PROCESS**

ISC is seeking proposals from interested consultants to conduct a review of the effectiveness of the current NLIS device accreditation system, to assess whether it can be improved within the scope of the terms of reference, which are detailed below.

### **Project aim**

The aim of the project is to review the current device assessment, accreditation and de-accreditation process, including the following documents:

1. NLIS Standard for Radio Frequency Identification Devices
2. NLIS Sheep and Goat Standard for visual tags
3. NLIS Field Trial Protocol

### **Project objectives**

1. Assess the scope for practical, cost effective changes to device assessment (including field trials) having regard to the requirement to maintain a balance of transparency, objectivity, flexibility and robustness in the current procedures, and recommend options for improvement;
2. Assess the requirements in place within the Standards that govern the device supply and auditing arrangements, and recommend options for improvement;
3. Assess the documents against the objective of facilitating the assessment of new or alternate identification technologies, and recommend changes if required. This will include the facilitation of technologies and devices that offer commercial benefits beyond identification;
4. Assess the industry request for the removal of the limits on the maximum tag size;
5. Review Australian device performance and assessment requirements against the International Committee for Animal Recording (ICAR), USA, Canada, NZ and EU arrangements, highlighting differences and opportunities for harmonisation;
6. Provide an interim report following consultation, outlining progress and findings to date; and
7. Provide a final report with recommendations across the following key areas:
  - a. The ability to better collect and assess device performance data after conditional accreditation is provided and commercial sales commence.
  - b. The objectivity and cost effectiveness of field trials, and options to improve them. This will include an assessment of the merits of modifying them, complementing them with additional assessment requirements, or replacing them.
  - c. A procedure to assess the performance of devices after full accreditation is granted, with a protocol governing ongoing requirements and the pathway to de-accreditation.
  - d. A response to the industry request regarding maximum tag sizes.
  - e. Requirements governing/facilitating the assessment of new technologies.

### **Out of scope**

1. ISC's internal process for licensing, managing non-compliance and de-accreditation.
2. The role of the NLIS Standards Committee

### Proposal requirements

Interested parties should develop a written response including:

- experience in the rationale for establishing standards for products and services, and knowledge of systems that underpin the assessment and accreditation of products or services generally
- experience in conducting program reviews involving multiple stakeholders
- knowledge of and/or experience working within the Australian livestock industry
- details of similar services provided to other clients
- proposed methodology for the delivery of the review
- estimated effort for achieving objectives (i.e. number of days required to deliver the project)
- daily rate and detailed budget breakdown (including daily fees, travel, other related expenses)
- personnel who will be performing the review and their qualifications to deliver the services
- proposed adherence to confidentiality
- any foreseen risks to successfully delivering the services and actions that will be taken to mitigate these risks
- details of reporting, invoicing and administrative procedures

### Reference materials and consultation

- The project will be overseen by the NLIS Standards Committee, with the Secretary and Chair as the key contact points
- ISC will provide documentation, stakeholder contacts, and supporting material as required
- The Consultant will need to have an ability to travel to Brisbane, Melbourne, Sydney, Canberra and regional centres for the purpose of consultation, along with phone/video consultation
- Consultation is to cover all RFID device licensees, Peak Industry Councils (CCA, SCA, GICA, ALFA, AMIC, ALEC) and State/Territory and Commonwealth governments

### Timeframe

- A proposal addressing the above requirements should be submitted to Mick Prendergast, NLIS Operations Manager, Integrity Systems Company ([mprendergast@nlis.com.au](mailto:mprendergast@nlis.com.au)) by **5pm Friday 15 December 2017**
- Target date for completing the review is **March 2018** (or 3 months from project commencement)

### Conflict of interest

The Consultant is requested to declare any conflict/s of interest. Where such a conflict of interest exists, this might be grounds for exclusion of the Consultant from consideration for this consultancy after an opportunity is provided to discuss the matter.

### Contract

The Consultant will be engaged using a standard ISC consultancy agreement.

### Confidentiality

The information contained in this brief and supporting material is confidential. The Consultant and other persons working on this proposal must not disclose any of this information to any other party. All information gathered in relation to the project is the property of ISC.

### Further information

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| Project queries | Mick Prendergast | NLIS Operations Manager,<br>Integrity Systems<br>Company Ltd | (07) 3620 5219<br>0419 651 046<br><a href="mailto:mprendergast@nlis.com.au">mprendergast@nlis.com.au</a> |
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