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From: Colorado Coalition Opposing Mandatory 4-H and FFA Premises I.D.

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**State-Wide Coalition Puts CSU On Notice: Halt Mandatory Premises
Registration for 4-H and FFA**

The newly-formed Colorado Coalition Opposing Mandatory 4-H and FFA Premises Identification today urged Colorado State University's Cooperative Extension Service to immediately halt implementation of mandatory premises registration for 4-H and FFA youth. The coalition is a rapidly expanding group of organizations and individuals from throughout the state who oppose making premises registration mandatory for 4-H and FFA youth.

On March 28, 2007 State 4-H Director Jeff Goodwin issued a directive to Colorado County Extension Agents indicating that all Colorado 4-H livestock project animals (beef and dairy cattle, sheep, swine, goat, poultry, llama and horse) must have a premises registration number, and that as of October 1, 2007 premises registration with the National Animal Identification System (NAIS) will be required at livestock project enrollment in the Colorado 4-H program. Goodwin's memo indicates the Colorado FFA program will have identical policy effective October 1, 2007. Goodwin's directive assures county agents that the Cooperative Extension Service "will stay the course, and in two years this will be a non-issue."

The National Animal Identification System (NAIS) has not been mandated by Congress. Opposition from livestock owners forced federal officials to redesign the proposed program as voluntary. There is no legislation supporting state or federal action to make premises registration mandatory for youth involved in 4-H or FFA.

The Colorado State Department of Agriculture has entered into a "cooperative" agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) authorizing the Colorado State Department of Agriculture to enhance **voluntary** premises registration on a state-wide basis.

“State-wide implementation of mandatory premises registration for 4-H youth was an arbitrary decision made in September 2006 by the 4-H Livestock Task Force, which was comprised of 15 to 20 county extension agents,” noted John Reid, Ordway, CO, chairman of the coalition and Vice-President of Colorado Independent Cattle Growers Association (CICA). “The State 4-H Director agreed, as did Colorado State University Extension Director Marc Johnson. Stakeholders were not given a voice in this decision. Those who are directly impacted by this decision - 4-H and FFA families - were not permitted to participate, demonstrating how Colorado State University has disenfranchised its constituents. There is overwhelming opposition to this initiative across the state.”

On February 6, 2007 the Rocky Mountain Farmers Union (RMFU) went on record opposing making premises registration mandatory for youth involved in 4-H or FFA live animal projects. CICA also opposes the mandate.

During an April 9 meeting of the Lincoln County Fair Board, Goodwin was asked what a youngster should do when their animal is kept at a location different from their own (which many 4-H members do). Goodwin’s response was “to persuade the landowner to register the premises or find a new location to house the animal.” Goodwin went on to suggest that the youth should register the landowner’s premises without the landowner’s knowledge or consent.

“Advising children to lie and sign up for a premises registration when they don’t own the premises defies the imagination, particularly when the advice comes from a director of a state youth development program,” commented Reid. “What began as a small brush fire has exploded into a raging forest fire in every corner of the state. It is unfortunate that taxpayers are being forced to defend their rights against their own land grant university.”

“Less than 25 percent of livestock production operations nation wide have registered for premises registration demonstrating overwhelming opposition to this program,” added Reid. The State of Arizona recently passed legislation prohibiting mandatory participation in NAIS, and at least a dozen other states are considering similar legislation. Forcing 4-H and FFA youth to register for premises numbers as a prerequisite to participating in 4-H and FFA projects is a predatory and discriminatory action aimed at padding the number of premises registered. 4-H and FFA are voluntary programs and, by law, must be administered without prejudice or discrimination, yet the director of Colorado’s 4-H program has suggested that youngsters who choose to enroll in animal projects be refused enrollment if their parents or guardians choose not to register their premises.”

By its own admission, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension is using this mandatory approach to premises registration for youth as one of many educational tools to train and educate youth, and their parents as well, regarding environmental and livestock stewardship. "It is an insult to CSU's constituency that university and Extension officials believe they must mandate a program in order to educate the taxpaying populace," commented Reid. "Rather than foist an unpopular and unwanted program on taxpayers and cloaking it as an educational tool, CSU's resources would be better spent on hosting educational seminars based on a scientifically-based curriculum from which youngsters would learn about animal health diseases and how to manage those risks."

"A premises registration clouds the title to property and can negatively affect its value. NAIS establishes a database of citizens' real property and the information collected is not protected from disclosure, putting landowners at risk for competitive misuse of the information or sale of their information," stated Kimmi Lewis, rancher from Kim, Colorado and 16-year 4-H leader. "Money talks, and obviously big money has come into Colorado and our children are being used to pad numbers for premises registration."

Individuals or organizations wishing to join the Colorado Coalition Opposing Mandatory 4-H and FFA Premises Registration should contact John Reid at 719/446.5210