

September 15, 2011

Improved livestock identification and tracking devices will benefit livestock industry

Edmonton... The livestock industry may have a new tool to help with the accuracy, environmental and financial challenges of tracking cattle.

Students in SAIT Polytechnic's (SAIT) School of Manufacturing and Automation developed ultra high frequency radio frequency identification (UHF RFID) tags for the Radio Frequency Identification Lab as an applied research project. Field trials of these tags will soon get underway thanks to a \$950,000 grant from the Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency (ALMA).

"The students and instructors at SAIT have made a significant contribution to addressing some of the challenges that producers face in tracing livestock in Alberta," said Jack Hayden, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. "This generation is taking an innovative and fresh approach to further advance Alberta's livestock industry."

UHF technology will potentially decrease the error read rate and improve read accuracy at a speed that better meets the demands of commerce. Field tests will provide the livestock industry with results to compare against the current RFID technology. UHF systems could potentially be more cost-effective than the existing system primarily due to the significantly lower hardware costs.

"Our RFID applied research team has unique expertise in the advanced technology required to assist in solving some of the tracking challenges faced by the livestock industry," said Irene Lewis, President and CEO of SAIT. "Thanks to the grant from ALMA, we'll be able to develop and test solutions to meet the traceability demands of the industry."

"One of the agency's goals is to enhance the competitiveness of Alberta's meat and livestock industry," said Gordon Cove, President and CEO of ALMA. "The SAIT grant will move us towards that goal as the new UHF RFID tags help Alberta producers meet the traceability demands of our meat and livestock markets."

The project is a collaborative research project involving SAIT, cattle industry representatives, Livestock Identification Services (LIS), Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development (ARD), and ALMA.

The UHF RFID project also benefitted from a Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) grant. Visit www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca for more information.

ALMA contributes ideas, information and investment as it works with industry partners to achieve a sustainable, profitable and internationally respected livestock and meat industry. For more information on ALMA, visit www.alma.alberta.ca.

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