



## Animal Diseases Affecting Texas Counties

Andy Schwartz, D.V.M.  
TAHC Executive Director & State Veterinarian

V.G. Young Institute of County Government  
Feb. 2, 2021



1

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## The TAHC was Established

TAHC was established in 1893 as the Livestock Sanitary Commission and charged with protecting the state's domestic animals "from all contagious or infectious diseases of a malignant character."



2

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## TAHC Today

TAHC remains true to this charge while evolving with the times to protect the health and marketability of all Texas livestock and poultry.

- Assure livestock and poultry health
- Disease control and eradication
- Prevent production losses
- Maintain trade avenues
- Prepare for and respond to emergency situations involving animals



3

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION**

## Legislative Authority

TAHC has legislative authority to regulate the prevention, control and/or eradication of specific contagious or infectious diseases in livestock and poultry.



Cattle    Equine    Swine    Poultry    Sheep & Goats    Exotic Fowl    Exotic Livestock  
*Bovines, cervids and camelids*

4

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

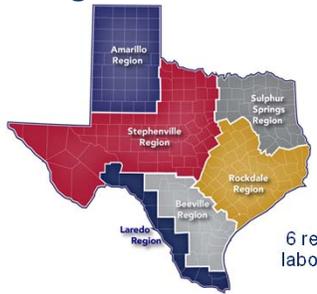
---

---

4

**TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION**

## TAHC Region Offices



Amarillo Region  
Stephenville Region  
Sulphur Springs Region  
Rockdale Region  
Beeville Region  
Laredo Region

6 region offices and 1 laboratory strategically located.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

5

**TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION**

## Commissioners

TAHC regulations are made and adopted by 13 governor-appointed commissioners who represent the general public and various livestock industries and professions.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

6



7

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### People of the TAHC

- Veterinarians & Epidemiologists
- Livestock Inspectors
- Legal & Compliance
- Laboratory Personnel
- Veterinary Authorized Personnel
- Emergency Management
- Administrative & Support Personnel

8

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Legal & Compliance

Attorneys, compliance officers and staff enforce agency regulations.

- write and serve demand and warning letters to violators
- file complaints in the Justice of the Peace court.
- facilitate roadblocks
- assist in emergency management operations

9

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Emergency Management

- TAHC is designated by the Governor as the lead agency for all animal issues related to natural disasters.
- By statute, the TAHC is responsible for animal disease response.

10

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Emergency Management: Natural Disasters

- Natural disasters affect animals as much as they do their human counterparts.
- The county judge is responsible at the local level for emergency management. They may also have an appointed Emergency Management Coordinator; they will work with local animal issues committee to address any animal needs during a natural disaster.
- The TAHC works in a support role with the local government and non-governmental partners to help plan for, respond to, and recover from natural disasters that affect livestock and companion and service animals. This includes promoting and supporting local animal issues committees and animal response planning.

11

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Emergency Management: Natural Disasters

TAHC Support Roles Include:

- Conducting animal needs assessments,
- gather animal shelter data,
- hay and feed operations,
- assist with public messaging,
- provide subject matter expertise, and
- receive and coordinate State of Texas Assistance Requests (STAR) from local jurisdiction.

12

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION**

### Emergency Management: Animal Disease

- As a part of our mission, the TAHC plans for and responds to animal disease outbreaks in the state.
- Unlike natural disasters, the TAHC serves by statute as the lead for all animal disease response at all levels of state government.
  - Local jurisdictions act in a supporting role to animal disease response instead of a lead role as in a natural disaster.

13

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

13

**TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION**

### Emergency Management: Animal Disease

TAHC Roles Include:

- Disease surveillance and identification,
- establishment of quarantines and movement restrictions,
- coordination with USDA in unified command,
- public information messaging, education, and media management,
- epidemiological tracing,
- carcass disposal coordination, and
- disease control or eradication.

14

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

14

**TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION**

### Emergency Management: Animal Disease

Local Jurisdictions Provide the TAHC:

1. Knowledge
2. Equipment & Facilities
3. Personnel
4. Authorities



15

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

15

**TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION**

## Emergency Management: Animal Disease

**1. Knowledge**

- Local weather forecasts and flood zones that may impact operations;
- Location of landfills, agricultural support facilities and stores, and other relevant services;
- Ground water information required for carcass disposal;
- Community information to address potential questions, rumors, and identify those reluctant to take action;
- Maps of jurisdictions, including locations of CAFOs.

16

16

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION**

## Emergency Management: Animal Disease

- Systems like the 9-1-1 address system, developed and implemented with the help of many county commissioners is used in conjunction with GPS coordinates to map disease outbreaks and coordinate disease response.



17

17

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION**

## Emergency Management: Animal Disease

**2. Equipment and Facilities**

- Facilities for use as Incident Command Posts (ICS)
- Storage facilities for vaccinations, PPE or other needs.
- Road signage to establish quarantines or movement controls.
- Vehicle/Equipment repair locations
- Heavy equipment, trailers and other machines for carcass disposal or movement of materials
- Truck washes for disinfection
- Consumables like gasoline

18

18

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**Emergency Management:  
Animal Disease**

**3. Personnel**

- Law enforcement personnel to control traffic, man control points and maintain order
- Local Public Information Officer support
- Voluntary organizations to provide food, water, sanitation facilities, and guides for responders not from the area
- Firefighting-HAZMAT personnel to assist with cleaning stations and biosecurity protocols

19

19

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**Emergency Management:  
Animal Disease**

**4. Authorities**

- Local public health officials to measure safety
- Law enforcement to enforce evacuation, quarantine, hold orders, or other mitigation measures
- Law enforcement to address potential security issues such as civil unrest or protest that may break established quarantines or put responders at risk
- Authorization of the use of public facilities, land, equipment, etc.

20

20

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**Emergency Management:  
Animal Disease**

**Texas Active Disease Threats:**

- African Swine Fever
- Foot-and-Mouth Disease
- Avian Influenza

**Currently Responding to:**

- Fever Ticks
- Tuberculosis
- Chronic Wasting Disease

21

21

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION**

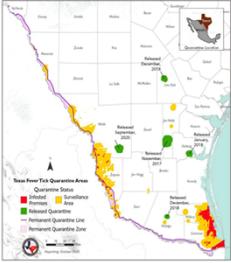
## Fever Ticks in Texas

Cattle fever ticks, are the most dangerous cattle ectoparasites in the United States. Fever ticks are capable of carrying and spreading the protozoa, or microscopic parasites, *Babesia bovis* and *B. bigemina*, to cattle causing bovine babesiosis, commonly known as cattle fever.



**Current Situation:**  
 178 Infested Quarantine Premises  
 8 Counties: Jim Wells, Maverick, Webb, Zapata, Starr, Hidalgo, Willacy, and Cameron.

**TEXAS Fever Tick Quarantine Areas**



TAMC Fever Tick Situation Report – October 2020  
22

22

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION**

## Public Dipping Vats in Texas

State statute, such as Section 167.059, Treatment Facilities, of the Texas Agriculture code requires counties to provide dipping vats, pens, chutes, and other necessary facilities for the treatment of cattle fever ticks. For example, Live Oak and Willacy Counties provide facilities or land leased for this purpose.



**Dipping Vat Locations in Southern Texas**

23

23

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION**

## Public Dipping Vats in Texas

- State statute, such as Section 167.059, Treatment Facilities, of the Texas Agriculture code requires counties to provide dipping vats, pens, chutes, and other necessary facilities for the treatment of cattle fever ticks. For example, Live Oak and Willacy Counties provide facilities or land leased for this purpose.
- There are currently public dipping vats in Bee, Cameron, Hidalgo, Jim Wells, Live Oak, Maverick, Starr, Uvalde, Val Verde, Webb, Willacy, and Zapata counties.



24

24

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Natural Disaster vs. Animal Disease

### Carcass Disposal

- In a natural disaster it is the responsibility of the local jurisdiction to handle animal carcass like debris according to their debris management plans.
- In a disease response, diseased carcasses require special handling and disposal to prevent disease spread. The TAHC will coordinate the proper disposal of carcasses with the support of TCEQ and the local jurisdiction.

25

25

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## Natural Disaster vs. Animal Disease

### Traffic Control

- In a natural disaster it is the responsibility of the local law enforcement to coordinate traffic control in the affected area for public safety.
- In a disease response, the TAHC may request local law enforcement assistance with traffic stops or roadblocks to prevent disease spread and illegal animal/product movements.

26

26

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



## State/Local Partnerships

- We work best when we work together.
- Animal response plans are critical for effective planning and response. The TAHC is always available to work with local jurisdictions to develop these plans.

27

27

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



**Thank you**

Questions?



TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION  
Protecting the People, the Animals, and the Land.  
Since 1989



[www.tahc.texas.gov](http://www.tahc.texas.gov)

28

---

---

---

---

---

---

---