

**MINUTES OF THE 365th COMMISSION MEETING
TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION
November 20, 2007**

Item 1 - Welcome and call to order by Chairman Traylor

The Texas Animal Health Commission Meeting was called to order by Chairman Richard Traylor at 8:30 a.m. in the Texas Animal Health Commission conference room.

Commissioners Jerry Windham, Rita Baca, and Reta Dyess were not present.

Item 2 - Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the 364th Commission Meeting held on September 18, 2007 was made by Commissioner Locke and seconded by Commissioner Simmons. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Traylor noted that Agenda Item 4: Audit Subcommittee Report will be given at the next Commission Meeting since the Audit Subcommittee did not have a quorum to meet today.

Item 3 – Report of the Executive Director and Approval of Actions for the Period 9/18/07 through 11/20/07.

An Out-Of-Office report describing meetings and trips from September 18, 2007 through November 20, 2007 was contained in the Commissioners' notebooks. This information was not presented as part of the oral report.

Dr. Hillman presented a report of significant activities and issues that occurred during this time period.

Animal Identification

At the USAHA annual meeting Dr. John Clifford, Deputy Administrator of USDA, APHIS, VS, and his staff discussed in expanded detail USDA's *Business Plan to Advance Animal Disease Traceability*, which is to be published in the December 4, 2007 Federal Register for comments. Key objectives of the plan include:

- Utilization of national standards in disease programs to increase compatibility of information systems
- Incorporation of national standards in producer-industry programs, and
- Integration of technologies to improve efficiency and accuracy of data collection

Under Secretary Bruce Knight and Dr. John Clifford have determined that the NAIS provides the common data standards required to close traceability gaps. The Business Plan contains seven strategies to advance animal disease traceability in the United States:

- (1) Prioritize Species/Sectors – Beef and Dairy Cattle are highest priority
- (2) Harmonize Animal Identification Systems
- (3) Converge NAIS Data Standards in Disease Programs and Regulations
- (4) Integrate Automated Data Capture Technologies with Disease Programs
- (5) Partner with States, Tribes and Territories
- (6) Collaborate with Industry
- (7) Advance Identification Technologies

USDA hosted a meeting with the Texas-Mexico Boarder Coalition in San Antonio during early November. The meeting focused on mechanisms and methods for getting animal identification program information to minority and under served groups. This effort will possibly generate more opportunities for TAHC to discuss animal identification and animal health issues with some of the minority livestock producers in the state. TAHC has participated in a number of meetings hosted

by the Texas-Mexico Border Coalition across South Texas over the past three years and look forward to continuing these efforts.

TAHC continues outreach efforts to register Texas Premises for those producers who seek to have their premises registered. The TAHC ID Coordinator is working with some livestock markets to equip them for collection of RFID information at the market.

TAHC is in the process of procuring handheld computers and a software system that will enable TAHC and USDA staff to collect RFID information and other animal information into tuberculosis or brucellosis test charts on handheld devices, then electronically transfer the data to the lab, area offices, epidemiologists and into the animal disease control database.

Data collection and electronic transfer systems are operational in two slaughter facilities. These systems allow uploading of data electronically to the GDB (Generic Data Base), eliminating the need for data entry from hard copies of test charts.

Following final approval of the dairy cattle identification regulation at the September Commission meeting, TAHC staff developed information letters about the regulation, and sent the letters to each dairyman and to each market operation in the state and to veterinary practitioners. The letters described an implementation schedule that provided a grace period until January 1, 2008 for the intrastate identification requirement, and described which identification tags or other methods for identification would be acceptable. Requests have been made that the grace period for full implementation be extended. The TAHC staff concur it is appropriate to extend the grace period until March 31, 2008 to more fully disseminate information to impacted producers and enable them to acquire tags for identification of their animals.

TAHC received a Petition to Amend the Regulations for Identification of Dairy Cattle. This petition was addressed under Item 10 on the agenda.

Fever Ticks

- The number of fever tick infested premises has increased from sixty-seven (67) at the end of September to eighty-five (85) by November 14th. Fifty-four (54) are in the Tick Eradication Quarantine Area and thirty-two (32) in the Temporary Preventive Quarantine. Area portions of the Free Area.
- Fever ticks have been found on a number of hunter-harvested white-tailed deer which originated on premises from both the Fever Tick Eradication Quarantine Area and from the Temporary Preventive Quarantine Areas. One of these premises does not have cattle, but has white-tailed deer as well as a number of exotic wildlife species. Fever ticks have been found on axis deer, fallow deer and aoudad sheep on this fever tick infested premises. This is the first time fever ticks have been documented on these species.
- The formation of a Fever Tick Working Group is anticipated to review current control and eradication procedures to determine their effectiveness under today's livestock and wildlife management practices. An in-depth evaluation of fever tick prevention, control and eradication strategies will be made.
- The emergency \$13 million funding request for Commodity Credit Corporation funds developed by Veterinary Services is awaiting final approval and submission to the Office of Management and Budget by the Secretary of Agriculture's office.
- Communication with ranchers, landowners and managers as well as hunters and the public has continued as a priority. TAHC and USDA staff made presentations and reports at industry and public meetings in the fever tick impacted areas. These public meetings have provided the opportunity to discuss fever tick issues and the plan of action, and to address questions from producers, sportsmen and the public. The Texas Deer Association developed and disseminated information to its members relative to fever tick issues. TAHC and USDA have made presentations at the USAHA Parasitic Diseases Committee and the BiNational Fever Tick Committee meetings. Additionally, both

participated in a cross border meeting with counterparts from the Mexican states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Tamaulipas and Nuevo Leon, which was held at Piedras Negras.

Tuberculosis

- TAHC and USDA, VS – Texas staff continue with significant Bovine Tuberculosis program activities. A number of issues of concern relative to the national TB program include: impact of Mexican origin cattle, pending domestic and international rules, and continuing impact of TB from other states. To discuss common issues of concern prior to the USAHA meeting, the Border States Veterinarians met in Albuquerque in early October. Issues were identified which could be addressed with USDA staff. During the USAHA meeting, some of these issues were discussed with Dr. John Clifford, Deputy Administrator.

Brucellosis

- High-titered cattle continue to be identified and evaluated each month. However, no new brucellosis infected herds have been identified in the state.
- TAHC continues to await USDA action relative to our request for Brucellosis-Free Status. Texas was assured by USDA staff at the USAHA Annual Meeting that this would be treated as a high-priority.

Legislative, Budget and Personnel Issues

- The TAHC Sunset Bill (HB 2543) codified a number of amendments to the agency's statutory authorities and responsibilities. One of these was the Commission's authority to regulate feral swine for disease control purposes. Commissioner Chuck Real formed a Feral Swine Working Group which has met twice to develop recommendations for rulemaking relative to feral swine.
- Budget areas of concern include: some increase in first-point testing; expenditures incurred responding to the fever tick situation, recruiting and retaining livestock inspectors, and lack of finalization of cooperative agreements due to budgetary decisions by Congress.
- The agency received a significant Homeland Security grant through The Governor's Division of Emergency Management. The funds will be utilized to improve electronic and wireless communications capabilities with some of the funds earmarked for fever tick program equipment and products. If the CCC fund request is approved, there is an earmark for a TAHC Tick cooperative agreement.
- Two staff changes include: Mr. Dale Preston replacing Rick Nabors as Director of the State/Federal Laboratories. Rick Nabors retired. Ms. Angela Lucas replacing Mike Jensen as Deputy Director for Administration and Finance. Mike resigned to take a position with the Comptroller's Office.

Waivers

- Two waivers were approved since the September Commission Meeting.
 - (1) A request to extend the validity of the brucellosis test by four days to accommodate transportation issues for a klipspringer being imported from the Memphis, Tennessee zoo.
 - (2) A request to waive the requirement for restarting the fever tick quarantine period after discovery of a crippled cow and her calf in a vacated pasture. The animals were found in a creek bottom from which the cow could not escape. The cow and calf were carefully scratched and found to be free of fever ticks. Additionally, the owner agreed to a scratch inspection of the cattle introduced to the pasture after quarantine release.

Planned Future Activities

- Fever Tick Activities
- TB Program Activities
- Animal identification activities
- Participation in industry organization meetings
- NCBA annual meeting

Commissioner Morales moved and Commissioner Locke seconded the motion to approve the actions of the Executive Director for the period from September 18, 2007 through November 20, 2007. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 4 – Audit Subcommittee Report

The Audit Subcommittee did not meet. There was not a quorum present. The Audit Subcommittee report will be presented at the next Commission Meeting in February.

Item 5 – Legislative Report

Mr. Bill Powers presented a legislative report update to the Commissioners. It is anticipated that when the Lt. Governor issues items to committees for interim study, fever ticks will be assigned to the Senate Subcommittee on Agriculture. Challenges to be addressed will include (1) Mexico being the source of the ticks, (2) wildlife as a host for the ticks, (3) pesticide resistant ticks, (4) changing demographics of the ranching industry in South Texas, and (5) Fiscal and Personnel needs. It is anticipated that the economic impact of the current fever tick program and a fever tick outbreak will be evaluated.

Item 6 – Presentation of Animal Health Activities Update and Animal Disease & Epidemiological Report – Dr. Dee Ellis

A. ANIMAL HEALTH PROGRAMS

Bovine Brucellosis

- Waiting on USDA for brucellosis review report
- Continuing to see suspect/reactor titers (30 per month +/-)
- B. suis and B. Strain 19 continue to be cultured

Bovine Tuberculosis

- *New Mexico* - Task Force was activated – 30+ working
No More infected dairies found so far – considering testing all dairies
186 traces to Texas – actively searching – 102 closed
All 3 Texas dairies tested since last meeting are negative
- *Oklahoma* beef herd – 7 traces pending – 1 herd tested negative
- *Bucking Bulls* – 116 traces closed – remainder to be tested by end of year
- *El Paso* zone surveillance update – 21 premises with cattle tested – 1594 head negative, 45 premises with goats (backyard) identified – will be tested by January
- *Wildlife Services* - will complete coyote surveillance by February 2008
- Dairy identification rule implementation – Delay implementation until April I.

Poultry

- HPAI Surveillance in backyard flocks – second round of testing underway
- Live bird market orientation of TAHC employees completed

Sheep and Goats

- Mexico border reopened for slaughter sheep

- Scrapie traces continue – 26 pending – no infection found this year

Swine

- Feral Swine Working Group appointed a small sub-working group. Recommendations will be presented back to the large group.
- Swine brucellosis review tentatively scheduled for Spring '08.

Equine

- Three (3) recent EIA infected horses with connection to Mexico and “brush” tracks
- Two documented clinical cases of EEE in east Texas
- Anthrax in horses in Tom Green county

Fever Tick Activities

- Continue to supply inspectors from across the state to supplement response
- Aggressive wildlife response limited until after deer hunting season

B. EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

TAHC now has a full Emergency Management staff. Dr. Ellis introduced Este Ramirez, his Administrative Assistant who will be working in both Animal Health Programs and Emergency Management.

Item 7 – Administration/Budget Status Report

Angela Lucas presented a report of the agency’s budget for Fiscal Year 2008 as of October 31, 2007.

- The Method of Financing Report was unchanged from the last Commission Meeting. Most of this report is Federal Funding money. Cooperative Agreement money is issued on a calendar year basis. Therefore this information will be updated for the next meeting.
- The report by Budget Category indicates all items are on target except Materials & Supplies due to the early purchase of CoRal.
- Everything is on target on the Budget & Expenditures by Department report

Because there were no changes, there was no Action taken.

Item 8 – Consideration of Possible Action on Agency Contracts and Purchases

Angela Lucas presented the following information:

Contracts, Purchases, Leases Greater than \$5,000 but Less Than \$10,000 for the period: 09/01/07 through 10/31/07

- Gamma Interferon Test Kits for Cattle – 4 - \$9,840.00

Contracts, Purchases, Leases \$10,000 or Greater for the period 09/01/07 through 10/31/07

- Fluorescence Polarization Test Instruments with carrying cases – 4 - \$16,015.49
- Custom made cattle scratch chutes – 3 - \$18,939.00
- Dectomax injectable tick treatment – 38 Cases - \$20,253.024
- Handheld data collection devices – 9 - \$22,942.35
- 2008 Chevrolet crew cab pickup truck – 1 - \$24,631.00
- CoRal Insecticide – 75 Cases - \$57,112.00
- Blanket Order for Gamma TB Gamma Interferon Test Kits – 30 Kits - \$73,8000
- Contract with TVMA– Veterinary Response Database maintenance - \$17,9000
- Portable John Bean Sprayer – 3 - \$36,000

- Spray Boxes – 2 - \$52,000
- Panels – Used with squeeze chutes - \$15,000
- Barnsoft Software Program and maintenance agreements – 20 - \$58,5000
- Handheld data devices – 36 – Pending satisfaction w/original order - \$91,800

Commissioner Morales moved and Commissioner Simmons seconded a motion to approve the contracts and purchases request for the period from September 1, 2007 through October 31, 2007. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 10 – Petition to Amend the Requirements for Identification of Dairy Cattle

A petition was submitted by the Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance requesting an amendment to Chapter 43, Tuberculosis, Subchapter A of the Texas Administrative Code. Commissioner Morales moved and Commissioner Locke seconded a motion to deny the petition to amend Chapter 43, Tuberculosis, Subchapter A of the Texas Administrative Code. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 11 – Consideration of and Possible Action on Regulation PROPOSALS Regarding: Chapter 35, Brucellosis, Subchapter D, Eradication of Brucellosis in Cervidae, regarding herd certification

Commissioner Jill Wood moved and Commissioner Ralph Simmons seconded a motion to propose amendments to Chapter 35, Brucellosis, Subchapter D, Eradication of Brucellosis in cervidae located in the Texas Administrative Code, as discussed. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 12 – Consideration of and Possible Action on Regulation ADOPTIONS Regarding: Chapter 59, General Practices and Procedures, Rule 59.12, regarding carcass disposal requirements and standards

Commissioner Ralph Simmons moved and Commissioner William Edmiston seconded a motion to Adopt amendments to Chapter 59, General Practices and Procedures, located in the Texas Administrative Code, as discussed. The motion carried unanimously.

Item 13 – Recognition of Public Comment

Judith McGeary representing the Farm & Ranch Freedom Alliance provided comments addressing Item 10 - Petition to Amend the Requirements for Identification of Dairy Cattle.

Troy Moore representing the Stephenville Cattle Company provided comments regarding identification of dairy cattle and made recommendations for the tagging system.

Stayton Weldon representing R-Calf USA provided comments supporting the position of the Farm & Ranch Freedom Alliance.

Item 14 – Set Date for the 366th Meeting

366th Meeting – February 19, 2008 – 8:30 am – Audit Subcommittee at 8:00 am

367th Meeting – May 15, 2008

Item 15 – Adjourn

Adjourned at 10:20 am