

Texas Animal Health Commission

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Dr. Dee Ellis Selected to Take Reins of Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC)

Veterinarian Dee Ellis of Rockdale has been named as Texas' new state veterinarian and executive director of the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC), the state's livestock and poultry health regulatory agency. Dr. Ellis will replace Dr. Bob Hillman, who will retire December 31 after serving in livestock and poultry health leadership capacities for more than three decades and as Texas' state veterinarian nearly seven years. The 13 governor-appointed TAHC commissioners, representing the public, livestock and poultry industries, announced the selection of Dr. Ellis at the TAHC commission meeting in Austin Tuesday, December 8.



Dr. Dee Ellis

"I am confident that Dr. Dee Ellis will be a fine state veterinarian and TAHC executive director. For five years, Dr. Ellis has served as the TAHC assistant state veterinarian, and his work ethic, abilities, training and qualifications are exemplary," said TAHC Chairman Ernie Morales of Devine, who also represents the feedlot industry on the 13-member commission.

"I am proud to have served as a commissioner during Dr. Bob Hillman's service at the TAHC and wish him the best in his retirement. In preparing for his succession, Dr. Hillman mentored and prepared staff for leadership, and Dr. Ellis is ready for this new challenge as executive director," said TAHC Commissioner Coleman H. Locke, beef industry representative and a member of executive search committee.

Dr. Ellis, originally from Comanche, was raised with a farming and dairy background. While completing his animal science degree from Southwest Texas State University (now Texas State University) in San Marcos, Dr. Ellis worked as a TAHC animal health inspector.

In 1984, Dr. Ellis obtained his doctorate of veterinary medicine at Texas A&M University, and practiced as an associate veterinarian in Gonzales. He returned to the TAHC as a field veterinarian in Wharton during some of the toughest battles to eradicate cattle brucellosis.

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Recognized for his leadership and innovation, Dr. Ellis was promoted in 1986 to area director for Central Texas, a position he held for 18 years. In 2002, Dr. Ellis completed a master's degree in Public Administration from Texas State University. In 2003, he transferred to the TAHC's Austin headquarters as the staff veterinarian to oversee the statewide cattle tuberculosis (TB) testing dairies and purebred beef cattle, and a year later was named assistant state veterinarian

Dr. Ellis has invaluable field experience fighting foreign animal diseases. He was detailed to Great Britain during the foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in 2001, helped eradicate exotic Newcastle disease in California and Texas in 2003, and worked on the Texas avian influenza outbreak in 2004. He is a foreign animal disease diagnostician, and has broad experience in emergency management and epidemiology," said Chairman Morales. "Dr. Ellis is nationally recognized among regulatory veterinarians and policy makers, has worked closely with Mexican animal health officials on cattle disease issues, and has been sought after as a speaker for livestock industry meetings. He can quickly 'digest' a problem and seek solutions with working groups, an attribute that we have come to appreciate and expect from the TAHC's excellent leadership."

"The TAHC's role has expanded in recent years to include not only disease, but also disasters. Dr. Ellis and the TAHC staff have gained invaluable experience in handling animal issues during Hurricanes Rita and Ike, wildfires in the Panhandle and floods in East Texas. Under his leadership, the TAHC will be ready to work closely with the livestock and poultry industries to address dire situations, whether it is a disease outbreak, manmade or natural calamity," said Mr. Locke.

Dr. Ellis resides in Rockdale, near Austin, where he has been involved in civic groups and youth sports activities. He and his wife Cheryl, math and science curriculum specialist for the Rockdale Junior High and High schools, are the parents of Toni and Chris, a senior and a sophomore, respectively, at the Mays School of Business at Texas A&M University in College Station.

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(A photo of Dr. Ellis is available by email.

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