

**SUMMARY MINUTES OF THE 424<sup>th</sup> COMMISSION MEETING**  
**Texas Animal Health Commission**  
**May 6, 2025**

**Item 1 – Welcome and Call to order by Chairman Locke**

The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) Commissioners met in person on Tuesday, May 6, 2025. Chairman Coleman Locke began the meeting at 8:30AM. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

**Item 2 – Roll Call for Commission Members**

The Chairman called the roll for the commission members. Commissioners Leathers, Oates, and Sturgess were absent. The absences were excused.

**Item 3 – Closed Executive Session to Receive Legal Advice, Discuss Pending or Contemplated Litigation, and Settlement Offers as Permitted by Section 551.071 of the Texas Government Code.**

The closed executive session was called at 8:34AM.

**Item 4 – Closed Executive Session to Deliberate the Appointment, Employment, Evaluation, Reassignment, Duties, Discipline, or Dismissal of Specific Commission Employees as Permitted by Section 551.074 of the Texas Government Code**

**Item 5 – Reconvene to Consider Any Action Needed Following Closed Executive Session**

The regular session was reconvened at 9:55AM. No action was needed.

**Item 6 – Approval of the minutes of the 423<sup>rd</sup> Meeting**

There was no public comment and no discussion concerning the minutes of the 423<sup>rd</sup> Commission meeting. The motion carried.

**Item 7 – Report of the Executive Director and Approval of Waiver and Variance Requests**

Dr. Dinges presented the following:

**(A) AGENCY OPERATIONS & AFFAIRS**

**Agency:** We are at 202.5 FTEs (out of 224.5) filled positions for our current FY25 count as of May 1, 2025.

**Rural Veterinary Incentive Program (RVIP):** The RVIP provides educational loan repayment assistance or payment of tuition and fees of up to \$180,000 to eligible veterinarians and veterinary medical students who demonstrate a commitment to working in designated rural Texas counties. The program offers up to \$45,000 for each year of full-time veterinary service in rural communities in need of a veterinarian. Funding is being discussed as part of a rider for the Higher Education Coordinating Board. If appropriated, it would be funded at \$2.5 Million for fiscal year 2026 and \$2.5 Million for fiscal year 2027.

**Veterinary Medical Loan Repayment Program (VMLRP):** The VMLRP provides student loan debt relief for veterinarians that serve three years in veterinary shortage areas. General VMLRP updates include the award amount has been increased from \$25,000 to \$40,000 per year of student loan debt for veterinarians that commit to working in a designated veterinary shortage area. An additional payment of \$15,600 per year to cover tax liability is now included, for a total maximum award of \$166,800 for three years (\$120,000 for loan repayment and \$46,800 for tax liability). Last cycle - FY 2024: Texas successfully nominated four veterinary shortage areas. The current cycle for FY 2025, TAHC strengthened its focus on the program and submitted applications for the maximum amount of eight (8) shortage areas. In determining what areas to nominate for

designated shortage areas, TAHC worked closely with authorized veterinarians around the state to understand where veterinary services are most needed and which clinics are having trouble recruiting/retaining new, younger veterinarians. TAHC focused its attention on counties along the Texas-Mexico border to ensure that sufficient veterinary services are in place to help maintain a strong international border and limit the risk of international animal disease outbreaks. This decision proved to be prudent with the detection of New World Screwworm (NWS) in southern Mexico in late 2024. All eight (8) shortage areas were awarded (45 counties total). Seven (7) shortage areas that will help private, rural clinics to recruit new vets. Webb, Starr, Zapata, Jim Hogg, and Duval Counties, located on the Texas-Mexico border, were designated as a shortage area. TAHC also focused on nominating areas in West Texas and the Panhandle, where we know recruitment and retention has become difficult. There are 30 counties in these areas designated. One (1) shortage area for a public service position at Texas Tech University School of Veterinary Medicine (SVM). This designated area is in Potter County. Currently, all USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture funding opportunities are under review.

**Cattle Fever Tick Treatment (Eprinomectin) Field Trial:** (appropriated \$316,000): This is a two-year trial. Initiated at the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge (LANWR) in Cameron County and abandoned day 112. The study was moved to USDA ARS Research Facility (Moore Field-Edinburg, TX) for a more controlled environment where cattle can be penned for inspection and treatment as required. The Moore Field project was completed on April 17th. Data analysis has begun, and a manuscript draft is being prepared. We should have preliminary findings by the summer. The residue project contract with the Texas A&M Animal Science Department is being finalized and is projected to begin early summer 2025. The second trial at the Laguna Atascosa National Wildlife Refuge is projected to begin in the Spring of 2026. Due to the need to abandon the study at the LANWR site, TAHC has asked for an additional \$ 30,000 as an exceptional item in the next biennium to complete all stages of the research trial. The LBB has added this dollar amount to the TAHC base budget for the next biennium.

## **(B) National Update**

### **Cattle Fever Ticks**

**Nematode Use:** A new Categorical Exclusion for nematode use that would expand the use of nematodes to the CFTEP program counties and would include application to wildlife and some cattle has been submitted to the FDA. USDA CFTEP is working out the Material Transfer Agreement with BASF and is hoping to receive a small shipment of the product to begin the project with several cooperating ranches in Cameron and Willacy counties this spring. USDA CFTEP is still waiting for this product to arrive from BASF.

**Rio Bravo Buffer Zone:** USDA APHIS, SADER/SENASICA and the Mexican States of Tamaulipas and Coahuila worked cooperatively to establish a cattle fever tick buffer zone with focused pilot project areas along the Rio Grande mirroring the permanent quarantine zone in Texas. The USDA allocated approximately \$150,000 USD to contribute to the project in 2025. The second phase will run from October 2024 – September 2025. The USDA has asked that there be an increase in wildlife surveillance. In Coahuila, the USDA pledged \$48,548.68 USD, and Mexico is providing \$49,381.38 USD to be utilized on the seventy (70) production units that have been identified (6,024 head). In the first quarter of FY 25, 1,733 head of cattle have been inspected and treated with low tick infestations so far. In Tamaulipas, the USDA pledged \$99,541.56, and Mexico is providing \$54,715.77 USD for use in 23 production units identified along the border. Treatments to be used include tick vaccine and macrocyclic lactones in the cattle and Ivermectin treated corn will be provided to the

deer. No work has been reported in Tamaulipas to date. This work has been paused due to the federal government's stopped payments for international agreements.

### **Asian Longhorn Tick (ALT)**

Monthly stakeholders call to discuss surveillance efforts for the ALT resumed on March 10<sup>th</sup>. The tick was discovered in Mayes Co. Oklahoma on August 8, 2024, with the latest discovery just to the north in Craig Co. To date 21 states and Washington DC have been affected. Affected states have been using producer education and outreach to mitigate the risk of introductions. Since the 2021 closure of the TAHC state-federal laboratory, largescale statewide ectoparasite surveillance has greatly decreased to the point that the agency only has the limited capacity to identify potential cattle fever ticks and other tick species in and around current cattle fever tick quarantine areas in south Texas and along the Texas-Mexico border. The TAHC is requesting additional funding in the form of an exceptional Item for the next biennium to procure additional equipment and personnel to increase foreign pest (i.e. cattle fever tick, Asian Longhorn Tick, and New World screwworm) surveillance more broadly throughout Texas by establishing a TAHC ectoparasite field identification laboratory.

### **New World Screwworm (NWS)**

**Mexico:** As of April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1,108 cases have been reported in cattle, horses, pigs, and sheep. One case has been confirmed in a human. These cases have been detected in the southern states of Chiapas, Campeche, Tabasco, Yucatan and Quintana Roo. To date Mexico has not reported surveillance efforts concerning wildlife or pets. Their efforts seem to be focused on farms and check points. The Mexican Government established two tiers of phytosanitary check points at the beginning of November 2024 (after NWS were detected in Guatemala). The southern check points are managed by the respective state with the federal government managing the northern check points. By the week of April 7<sup>th</sup>, wildtype flies/active cases had breached the level of the southernmost (state run) checkpoints. It was not until the week of April 14<sup>th</sup> that SENICICA implemented NWS restrictions in the area between the northern and southern tier of checkpoints. As of April 21<sup>st</sup>, US contractor Dynamic Aviation had not been issued the proper permits by aviation authorities in Mexico. Dynamic Aviation has not been allowed access to certain airspace and airports. They have not been allowed to distribute flies and pupae 7 days a week. Too, Mexican customs authorities are imposing substantial import duties on critical aviation parts, dispersal equipment and sterile fly shipments. Mexico has not been a willing participant in the full deployment of sterile insect technique operations. All materials and operations are being funded entirely by the U. S. Government to support the shared goal of stopping the northward spread of NWS. The Isthmus of Tehuantepec will serve as a new buffer zone receiving most/ if not all of the Sterile NWS flies produced at the Panamanian facility each week (110 million flies - production capacity each week). It may take 6 months to a year to establish and verify the effectiveness of this buffer zone / barrier.

**USDA Response:** On April 26<sup>th</sup>, Secretary of Agriculture Rollins sent a letter to the Mexican Secretary of Agriculture requesting that the office engage directly with AFAC (equivalent to US FAA), SAT (Customs) and other relevant Mexican federal entities to facilitate Dynamic Aviation's operational clearance for as long as needed; secure full import clearance and duty waivers for all NWS related aircraft parts, sterile flies, and sterile insect technique equipment currently being provided by APHIS for the eradication campaign. Secretary Rollins also asked that the Mexican Secretary of Agriculture designate a high-level point of contact who will work directly with USDA APHIS to remove remaining bureaucratic and regulatory obstacles with urgency. Secretary Rollins made it clear that the issues must be resolved by Wednesday, April 30, or the USDA would once again

restrict the importation of animal commodities which consist of live cattle, bison and equine originating or transiting Mexico to protect the interest of the agriculture industry in the United States.

Rollins also proposed convening a U.S. – Mexico NWS Aerial Dispersal Strategy Meeting, with participation from both governments, technical experts and operational partners to align strategies and ensure a seamless and sustained response.

On April 30<sup>th</sup>, Mexico committed to eliminate restrictions on USDA aircraft and waive customs duties on eradication equipment aiding in the response to the spread of New World Screwworm (NWS). Due to this agreement the ports will remain open to livestock imports.

However, if at any time these terms are not upheld, port closure will be revisited.

The USDA has developed two, 20 member NWS strike teams, one for the southeast U. S. and one for the southwest U.S. The teams will assist with NWS response efforts and be trained to do area surveillance and to release sterile NWS flies. The week of April 7<sup>th</sup>, the USDA provided a weeklong training at Moorefield Airbase in Mission, TX for the strike teams. Training included surveillance, identification of NWS flies/larvae as well as the release of sterile flies. TAHC had four staff members in attendance (3 training/1 observing).

**Texas Response:** The TAHC staff-initiated preparedness activities in response to the rise in NWS detections in Central America beginning in March 2024. Efforts to train on, maintain, and establish components of response plans are underway and will continue to evolve with the situation. Preparation, education, and discussion with federal and state government partners is ongoing. TAHC and USDA personnel across Texas have been trained to conduct inspections, take and submit samples (sample collection kits have been distributed to field personnel), and perform treatments in the event of a NWS response.

Education and outreach efforts to raise awareness continue to be conducted. Reports of maggots or suspicious wounds can be made to the TAHC Region offices, the TAHC Central office or the TAHC Vet on Call after hours. Potential wildlife detections can be reported to TPWD. If suspected in humans, reports can be made to the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) or CDC.

TAHC continues to meet with industry groups to keep them apprised of the NWS situation in Mexico and discuss the latest information involving response, treatment, control and eradication efforts.

### **Other Disease Information**

**Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA):** To date in 2025, we have detected 29 positive horses. Iatrogenic transmission involving the use of contaminated injectable products and/or blood doping as well as contaminated IV sets, syringes and needles are a concern.

### **Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)**

#### **Poultry: National - February 8, 2022**

- 168.6 million birds affected
  - 1,693 premises in 50 states/Puerto Rico (1,018 WOAHPoultry/ 675 WOAHP Non-Poultry) (05/02/2025)
- **Texas:** 14 total HPAI positive premises since February 2022 to include 2 commercial flocks, totaling 1,895,800 birds
  - Latest being WOAHP Non-poultry: Brazoria Co, January 2025 & Burnet Co, January 2025

**Dairy/Livestock: - National - March 25, 2024**

- Influenza A, H5, Clade 2.3.4.4b, genotype B3.13
- 18 states - 1050 Confirmed Premises (05/02/2025)
- **Texas:** 27 premises – Panhandle and Stephenville Milk Sheds (05/02/2025). Have not discovered an epi link associated with cattle movements between milk sheds. Last known test positive premises showing clinical signs was disclosed on December 13, 2024, and located in the Panhandle Milk Shed.

Spillover events of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b, genotype D1.1 have occurred in both Nevada dairy cattle (January 2025) and Arizona dairy cattle (February 2025). The confirmations were a result of both states' tracing and investigation efforts, following an initial detection on silo testing under the [USDA's National Milk Testing Strategy](#). Genotype D1.1 represents the predominant genotype in the North American flyways this past fall and winter and has been identified in wild birds, mammals, and spillovers into domestic poultry.

**USDA National Surveillance Mandatory Program** (Mandatory testing of unpasteurized milk intended for interstate movement) – Animal Health Protection Act Federal Order – December 6, 2024

**USDA APHIS National Milk Testing Strategy (NMTS)** – Facilitates comprehensive H5N1 surveillance of the Nation's milk supply and dairy herds.

- Increase USDA's and public health partners' understanding of where the virus is present in the United States,
- Support the rapid implementation of enhanced biosecurity measures to decrease the risk of transmission to other livestock, and
- Inform critical efforts to protect farm workers to help lower their risk of exposure.
- **National Milk Testing Strategy 5 Stages:**
  - **Stage One:** State/Regional Snapshot
  - **Stage Two:** Determining State Status
  - **Stage Three:** Detecting, responding to, and eliminating the Virus
  - **Stage Four:** Demonstrating H5N1 Disease Freedom within a State
  - **Stage Five:** Demonstrating H5N1 Disease Freedom in U.S. Dairy Cattle

Texas began the National Milk Testing Strategy on April 7<sup>th</sup> by conducting plant silo monitoring. The Department of State Health Services (DSHS) administers the pasteurized milk ordinance established by the FDA and is conducting silo sampling. Presently, there are a total of 202 test-eligible silos situated at 44 different processing plants in Texas. At the conclusion of week 4 of testing, DSHS reported 76/202 silos were sampled from 36/44 premises. Also, DSHS reports 60 silos were exempt (not sampled) from testing for various reasons such as the silo was empty, not in use, or did not contain grade A fluid milk. To date, TAHC has not been made aware of a positive silo.

If a positive silo is detected, TAHC will be responsible for coordinating the collection of bulk milk tank samples from each dairy in the positive silo to detect the positive dairy. TAHC will work with the positive dairy to mitigate spread and ultimately eliminate the virus from the premises.

**C) WAIVERS and VARIANCES (Action Item)**

There were thirteen waivers requested, eleven of which were approved.

- Pullorum Typhoid – **Approved** – allowed entry of zoo birds without PT test. Birds were from a zoo environment and were quarantined upon arrival.

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- Tuberculosis – **Denied** – request was to ship an exotic Bovidae prior to TB testing. Receiving facility could not guarantee tracking or testing of the animal upon arrival.
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- Avian Influenza – **Approved** – allowed entry of turkeys related to TPWD restocking project prior to testing to reduce stress. The birds were quarantined, examined, and tested upon arrival.
- Tuberculosis – **Approved** – requested waiver of type of TB test administered to exotic Bovidae. The animal was raised in a zoo environment and met requirements for entry.
- Tuberculosis – **Approved** – allowed cattle to enter from sister facility without a TB test to allow the full herd to be tested by regulatory veterinarians in an assurance test.
- Avian Influenza – **Denied** – request to waive HPAI testing for comingled exhibition poultry was denied due to the persistence of the disease in multiple states.
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The motion to approve the waivers and variances passed.

### Item 8 – Legislative Update

Juan Alfaro provided the following legislative update:

- As of April 28th, there were 3,060 Senate bills filed and 5,634 House bills
- Six Senate bills passed:
  - SB 14 by Sen. King – Relating to the procedure by which state agencies adopt rules and impose regulatory requirements and the deference given to interpretation of laws and rules by state agencies in certain judicial proceedings (Effective September 1, 2025)
  - SB 503 by Sen. Perry – Relating to the establishment of an electronic registry of livestock marks and brands
- Status of SB 1 – The Budget Bill:
  - **Rider 7:** Information Technology, Reporting Requirement - TAHC shall report to the LBB and the Governor's Office an annual report, due November 1st of each fiscal year, the agency's efforts to improve information technology capabilities
  - **Rider 9:** Cattle Fever Tick Mitigation Clinical Trials - \$30,000 in FY 2026 for the purpose of completing cattle fever tick mitigation clinical trials.

- **Rider 11:** Report on Livestock Threats Over Ten Years - \$100,000 in FY 2026 to create and submit a report, no later than December 1, 2026, on threats to livestock over the next ten years, including recommendations on ways to combat the threats. Report to be submitted to LBB, Senate Finance Committee, House Appropriations Committee, Senate Committee on Water, Agriculture and Rural Affairs, and the House Committee on Agriculture & Livestock.
- Status of HB 500 – Supplemental Appropriations and Rider 65 in Higher Education Coordinating Board Bill Pattern:
  - Article 9 Section 9.01(11) Motor Vehicle Purchases, TAHC: \$92,000 from General Revenue. Referred to Senate Finance Committee for consideration
  - Ride 65. Rural Veterinary Incentive Program: \$2,500,000 for FY 2026 and \$2,500,000 for FY 2027 to support the Rural Veterinary Incentive Program (RVIP)

## **Item 9 – Presentation of Animal Health Programs and Disease Traceability Activities**

Dr. T.R. Lansford presented:

1. Animal Disease Traceability (ADT)
  - a. Federal (Interstate) ADT Rule Update
    - i. Still no issues that we have been made aware of
    - ii. REFERENCE ONLY Official Identification for Cattle and Bison (§ 86.4) Section 86.4 § 86.4(a)(1)(i) adds the requirement that, beginning November 5, 2024, all official eartags sold for or applied to cattle and bison must be readable both visually and electronically.
  - b. Sheep and Goat Scrapie Identification
    - i. The number of calls from sheep and goat producers continues to be strong, in large part due to the ongoing cooperation of the sheep and goat markets distributing the informational letter and participation at sheep and goat industry events.
    - ii. Working with USDA APHIS to potentially receive additional free scrapie tags to assist with compliance with tagging requirements
  - c. No-cost provided RFID tag distribution (see slide)
    - i. Requests for RFID tags were not as many this quarter compared to last quarter (see slide), but were are now just shy of 1.8 million tags distributed
    - ii. TAHC received the total FY24 no cost RFID tag allotment and we are beginning to order from the FY25 allotment
  - d. Stakeholder outreach
    - i. Electronic reader distribution
      1. The effort to provide accredited, authorized veterinarians with no-cost electronic ID reading/scanning devices continues. Currently, TAHC staff have put 247 readers into the hands of accredited veterinarians for their use in program disease and livestock movement efforts. (see slide with map depicting reader distribution).
    - ii. ADT staff continue to participate in industry events to provide information to producers on the updated rule, official ID requirements, and to distribute RFID tags.
    - iii. TAPP and Communications continue to assist with messaging
    - iv. Continue to work with veterinarians and markets on appropriate use of NUES (metal clip) tags on cattle

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- v. Working with Texas A&M Agrilife Extension to formalize show animal validation tagging agreements and protocols
- e. Other activities
  - i. Dr. Dinges and I attended the National Institute of Animal Agriculture meeting in Kansas City in April. The last day of the meeting was focused on where the scrapie program goes post-disease freedom classification in 2028. Representatives of the Gillespie Livestock Company echoed the consensus that the sheep/goat ADT rules need to be separated from the scrapie rules.
  - ii. Continue to standardize information collection forms and processes
- 2. Animal Health Programs
  - a. Staffing updates
    - i. Region Directors: Amarillo and Beeville Region Director positions remain open
    - ii. Field Staff (Inspectors and Region Administrative Assistants). Applicant pools have been deep and interest high and there are no significant hiring issues to report at this time
    - iii. Agency wide, we have 202.5 out of 224.5 FTE positions filled. Agency turnover has decreased from 34% in 2021 to 18.4% in FY2024 and continues to trend downward (less than 5% in the first quarter of FY2025)
    - iv. Thank you to our great Region Management teams and HR Specialists for their work in keeping positions filled
    - v. On a sad note, Dr. Bohl has opted to pursue another route and will be leaving us officially on May 31. I personally, along with the entire Agency, will miss his institutional knowledge and dedication to service of the livestock industries. I want to extend my deepest gratitude and appreciation for the work that he has done in the last 14 months to get our Regions back on their feet and, along with the entire Agency, wish him the very best in his future endeavors.
  - b. Field activities
    - i. Field staff continue to ramp up awareness of and take part in training for NWS – more in the EM section. Thank you to Dr. Leyendecker and the LR Region for taking this challenge by the horns and the contributions they are making
    - ii. Continue to stand-by to coordinate with DSHS and dairy producers in the event a non-negative silo is detected. We want to thank our great partners at DSHS for all their work on the National Milk Testing Surveillance program.
- 3. Program Records and Quality Assurance
  - a. Since the last Commission Meeting, 2 of the 3 major data backlogs of CVIs have been completed.
    - i. During the transition from SCS and Square9 to TexCore, several CVIs were identified as unprocessed. To keep the dates of transition as clear as possible, these CVIs were processed using the previous processes. Over the past year, over 37,000 CVIs were manually documented and uploaded to the CoreOne database. In addition, more than 21,000 premises were matched to the corresponding movement records. As of April 1, 2025, all backlogged Square9 movement records have been processed and matched within CoreOne.
    - ii. Additionally, since September 1, 2024, the Program Records staff have been working diligently to ensure that all CVIs received from DVMs are provided to the appropriate destination state within 7 days of receipt. As of April 1, 2025, the Program Records staff have brought this data queue to current and are keeping CVIs moving forward to the appropriate destination state. The team



forwarded almost 64,000 backlogged and current CVIs (the number of routed CVIs from Oct. 1, 2024 - Mar. 31, 2025).

- iii. The final data backlog lies within premise and tag documentation. The Department is currently in the beginning stages of identifying timeframes for completion and intends to set a target completion date soon.
- iv. Continue to see need and value in moving to electronic movement documents.

b. Quality Assurance

- i. The QA team has begun a significant project in cleaning up duplicated premise data within TexCore starting with the Amarillo Region by conducting a data review to identify positive processes, areas needing data assistance, and providing specific support in data management. Template developed will be duplicated in other Regions.
- ii. The Agency recently received grant funding under NADPRP (National Animal Disease Preparedness and Response Program) for a project titled "Advancing Knowledge of Animals Entering the State of Texas." Specifically, this project will improve the permitting process and subsequent notification of permitting and Hold Orders associated with the permits, especially as related to Tuberculosis in dairy and beef on dairy cross calves in feedyards. The framework for this permitting and notification process can also be tailored to other disease programs and improve data consistency between permits and secondary documents within the database.

4. Emergency Management (see slides)

a. Training/Preparedness

- i. Preparations related to NWS remain at the forefront of EM activities
  - 1. Internal NWS workshop to continue to develop tactical level plan
  - 2. Attended the USDA NWS Southwest Strike Team training
  - 3. Have identified items for purchase, some of which to be presented today for your consideration
  - 4. Weekly NWS planning coordination meeting with USDA APHIS and ARS
- ii. Attended the TAHC Compliance Workshop
- iii. Tri-state Feedlot Exercise (IIAD) Planning Meetings
- iv. Had a foaming workday to test our foaming equipment and capabilities
- v. Sarah Oettle, TAHC Planner, attended plans section chief training

b. Response: Local responses to several severe weather events – recent floods in Rio Grande Valley

c. Outreach and Engagement

- i. Attending producer/stakeholder NWS Roundtable in Raymondville
- ii. Joined other state counterparts at Critical Infrastructure Protection and Resilience North America Conference to present on the importance of agriculture in critical infrastructure
- iii. Continue to engage with multiple national level and state agriculture preparedness groups

d. Secure Food Supply Program Updates

- i. Engaging with other states via the SFS Workgroup (best practices, new ideas, etc.)
- ii. Engaging with livestock marketing associations regarding SFS in sale barns (ties in with livestock market series workgroup). Attend Oklahoma's pilot Secure Sale Barn tabletop exercise (Feb. 28)

e. Upcoming Events

- i. Conduct internal NWS field training (fly surveillance, animal surveillance and producer/owner outreach)
- ii. ICS 300 course (Agriculture based) mid-June in San Antonio

#### **Item 10 – Presentation Of Disease Information and Epidemiology Activities**

Dr. Trey James, Field Epidemiologist, presented:

##### **Cattle**

- HPAI in Livestock – Texas has had 27 confirmed cases as of 4/29 in Amarillo and Stephenville Regions
- Zero confirmed cases to date in the past 30 days
- Cattle Tuberculosis: Seven herds under assurance testing, 11 ongoing trace investigations
- Cattle Brucellosis – in the 2nd quarter of 2025, 7,117 test were performed with 3 suspects
- Cattle Trichomoniasis – 4,044 PCR tests, and 0 positive results
- Cattle Fever Ticks: 107 fever ticks collected

##### **Equine**

- Equine Infection Anemia – There were 30,391 tests run and 17 total positive results
- Equine Piroplasmiasis – 3,954 *T. Equi* test run with one positive case. There were 1,229 *B. Caballi* tests run with two positive cases

##### **Avian**

- Avian Influenza – Texas had zero cases of HPAI in the first quarter of 2025 with 2036 tests conducted
- Infectious Laryngotracheitis – Texas has had 4 cases of ILT in 2025
- Pullorum Typhoid – 123 flocks tested, which totaled 7,797 birds with zero positives

##### **Swine**

- Swine Brucellosis – there were 5,002 tests with four cases in 2025
- Pseudorabies – there 4,888 tests with four cases in 2025

##### **Chronic Wasting Disease:**

- Positive found in Kaufman County in Calendar Year 2025, trace history to 2021 positive incident, HCP certified herd, herd visit is complete, undecided on disposition of herd
- There were 248 traces closed from 2021, 26 for 2022, 214 for 2023, and 62 for 2024, 19 for 2025

#### **Item 11 – USDA-VS Report**

Dr. Louisa Collins presented updates for USDA VS and the Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program.

Dr. Collins reported additional changes in the Federal workforce since her last report with seven total staff leaving for deferred retirements, including the Director of the Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program (CFTEP). His replacement has already been named and is on board already. Import Export Services (IES) also lost a number of staff. This may result in import/export certificates being routed to other states for signature. At the time of her report, only one port in Texas was open, but discussions were in progress to open a second port. HPAI deployments have slowed but are expected to pick up in the fall. There has been an announcement that an emphasis will be placed on biosecurity to prevent infection, indemnity, and vaccination will be considered. Additionally, with biosecurity focused assessments, USDA and the poultry companies will assess the facility's biosecurity and cost share improvements. To date, three Texas facilities have signed up. Training was conducted with the Southwestern Strike Team on NWS surveillance, with another planned for May for the Southeastern team. Additionally, CFTEP staff have stepped up surveillance procedures on stray livestock captured in border areas. Finally, \$1.29 million NADPrep grant awards went to Texas. Five million more went to TAMU with \$300 thousand for NWS preparedness, some funds for FAD response, and some point of care testing for FADs.

**Item 12 - Budget Status Report**

The following was presented by Paula Andrews:

- FY 2025 Budgeted Revenue - \$20,739,022
  - General Revenue - \$16,162,652
  - AHP Fee Revenue – \$860,000
  - Federal Funds - \$1,766,722
  - UB General Revenue – 1,749,648
  - UB Capital Equipment – 200,000
- Federal Funds as of March 31, 2025

Strategy	Prior Year (as of 8/31/2023)	Current Year (as of 3/31/2024)	Total by Strategy
Field	\$97,980	\$3,649,437	\$3,747,417
Animal Health Emergency Mngmt			
Pass Through High Fence			
		Total Spendable Funds	\$3,747,417

- Fiscal Year 2025 Expenditures (Agency Level)

Category	BUDGET	YTD EXPENSE (as of March 31, 2025)	AVAILABLE
Salaries and Wages	\$12,931,017	\$7,682,150	\$5,248,867
Other Personnel Costs	\$634,771	\$112,823	\$521,948
Professional Fees & Services	\$110,410	\$58,527	\$51,883
Fuels and Lubricants	\$102,940	\$238,964	-\$136,024
Consumable Supplies	\$167,704	\$52,381	\$115,323
Utilities	\$289,092	\$157,856	\$131,236
Travel	\$746,794	\$262,882	\$483,912
Rent- Building	\$626,630	\$607,902	\$18,728
Rent- Machine Other	\$75,607	\$29,010	\$46,597
Other Operating Expense	\$3,104,409	\$1,712,045	\$1,392,364
Totals	\$20,739,022	\$10,925,192	\$9,813,830

The motion to approve the report passed.

**Item 13 – Consideration of and Possible Action on Agency Contracts and Purchases**

Paula Andrews presented contracts and purchases for the consideration of the Commissioners, which included contracts, purchases, and leases for AY 2025.

The motion to approve the contacts, purchases, and leases passed.

**Item 14 – Consideration of and Possible Action to Change Commission Contract Approval Threshold from \$50,000 to \$75,000**

The following was presented by Ms. Jeanine Coggeshall:

- The threshold is an internal control, there is no threshold set by law

- Last modified at the 399<sup>th</sup> meeting in August of 2017
- Outline of internal controls and procedures to ensure purchases are necessary and compliant with state purchasing guidelines
- Increase would be from \$50,000 to \$75,000 to allow for flexibility given rising costs if items

The motion on increase the Commission contract approval threshold from \$50,000 to \$75,000 passed.

**Item 15 – Consideration of and Possible Action on Orders Related to Commission Rule Violations and Proposals for Decision**

Mr. Jabbar Fahim presented orders related to Commission rule violations for consideration of the commission. The orders were approved.

**Item 16 – Presentation of Petitions for Rulemaking**

Ms. Penny Maley presented the following:

- a) Petition Related to Interstate Movement of Exhibition Poultry  
Purpose of request for change: allow exhibition poultry to bypass CVI and entry permits when traveling interstate, empower Texas-authorized PT testers to perform the tests, and add a specific category that defines exhibition poultry.

Commission Rules require poultry entering Texas to be accompanied by a CVI and entry permit. Additionally, a negative flock or negative individual bird test for Avian Influenza within 30 days prior to entry and a negative PT test within 30 days prior to entry. Testing requirements are imposed for 72 hours prior to entry and are required for entry from an HPAI affected state.

Staff considered the petition and looked at the overall risk of disease transmission. Findings include: Poultry exhibitions are potential sources for disease spread due to gathering of birds from multiple jurisdictions, transport stress on the birds, and frequent lack of adequate biosecurity at events. Requiring Texas birds that leave the state to participate in an exhibition to have a permit and CVI prior to entering Texas ensures birds have been inspected prior to re-entry and have been found free of symptoms or evidence of disease. Birds from an AI clean flock provide little assurance that the birds remain free from AI following competing in an out-of-state poultry exhibition when commingled with birds from other jurisdictions. Staff recommend denying the petition.

The motion to deny the petition passed.

**Item 17 – Consideration of and Possible Action on Proposed Rule Review**

Ms. Penny Maley presented the following rules for proposed review:

- a) 4 Tex. Admin. Code Ch. 40, Chronic Wasting Disease
- b) 4 Tex. Admin. Code Ch. 41, Fever Ticks
- c) 4 Tex. Admin. Code Ch. 53, Market Regulations
- d) 4 Tex. Admin. Code Ch. 54, Domestic & Exotic Fowl Registration
- e) 4 Tex. Admin. Code Ch. 57, Poultry

The motion to PROPOSE the listed rules for review passed.

The notice of the proposed amendments will be published in the Texas Register with a 30-day comment period. Comments regarding the proposals may be submitted to Amanda Bernhard, Texas Animal Health Commission, 2105 Kramer Lane, Austin, Texas 78758, by fax at (512) 719-0719 or by email at "comments@tahc.state.tx.us".

#### **Item 18 – Consideration and Possible Action on Adoption of Proposed Rules**

Ms. Penny Maley presented the following:

- a) Chapter 51 Rule Requirements
  - Purpose of request for change: Currently, Commission rules distinguish between interstate shows and intrastate shows and have different entry requirements for each. The amendments to § 51.1, Definitions, remove definition of “interstate show” and add definition of “official identification.” The amendments to § 51.4, Shows, Fairs, and Exhibitions create a recordkeeping requirement for show sponsors, eliminate distinction between interstate and intrastate shows, maintain entry requirements for out-of-state participants, and eliminate need for Texas participants to meet same standards of out-of-state participation. The Commission received written comments from 38 individuals all in support of the rule during the 30-day comment period. Commenters noted that the change will greatly reduce the burden on Texas youth participants. Additionally, show sponsors are already collecting the necessary information to ensure traceability and that maintaining entry requirements for out-of-state participants would help ensure animal health and biosecurity.

The motion to ADOPT amendments to Chapter 51 Entry Requirements passed.

#### **Item 19 – Consideration and Possible Action on Proposed Rules**

Ms. Jeanine Coggeshall presented the rules for proposal:

- a) Chapter 32, Hearing and Appeal Procedure, Chapter 40, Chronic Wasting Disease

The CWD HCP is a voluntary federal program administered by USDA for both native and exotic CWD-susceptible herds with guidelines issued under Program Standards. The Program Standards, which includes two components, Part A (Standards for the HCP) and Part B (Standards for State Response), were last updated in May 2019. Texas currently has 81 herds in good standing, which includes two exotic herds and 79 native herds. Participation has significantly declined since 2021 when there were 376 enrolled herds. HCP participation is not required to own exotic cervids or keep native deer captive in Texas. The Program Standards Part B applies to all herds in Texas, not just HCP herds and requires 5-year traces on CWD positives as well as a 5-year post-exposure facility quarantine. Herd plan options are limited and must be approved by USDA to ensure they are compliant with Program Standards. Pairing the repeal of the Herd Certification Program with amendments of CWD rules will provide sensible regulations that work for Texas by reducing the regulatory burden on producers in instances of CWD-positive cases, make CWD hold orders and quarantines optional rather than mandatory by changing language in rule from “shall” to “may,” and removing the requirement that herd plans and traces be set at a minimum of 5 years. It will also allow for individual herd plans, rather than only USDA-approved templates and will repeal CWD surveillance and containment zones entirely. This will

reduce regulations on CWD-Susceptible Exotic Cervids by changing surveillance testing from 100% of mortalities to 3 valid tests each year, clarify that surveillance is focused on captive exotic cervids, and allow testing through ELISA testing.

The motion to PROPOSE amendments to Chapter 32, concerning Hearing and Appeal Procedures, and Chapter 40, concerning Chronic Wasting Disease passed.

The notice of the proposed amendments will be published in the Texas Register with a 30-day comment period. Comments regarding the proposals may be submitted to Amanda Bernhard, Texas Animal Health Commission, 2105 Kramer Lane, Austin, Texas 78758, by fax at (512) 719-0719 or by email at "comments@tahc.state.tx.us".

b) Chapter 51, Entry Requirements

The proposed amendments clarify that one of three forms of accepted identification is needed for ratites entering Texas and provide simplified entry requirements for exotic fowl, excluding ratites, moving between AZA facilities by allowing entry without PT and AI testing and without entry permitting.

The motion to PROPOSE amendments to Chapter 51, Entry Requirements passed.

The notice of the proposed amendments will be published in the Texas Register with a 30-day comment period. Comments regarding the proposals may be submitted to Amanda Bernhard, Texas Animal Health Commission, 2105 Kramer Lane, Austin, Texas 78758, by fax at (512) 719-0719 or by email at "comments@tahc.state.tx.us".

**Item 20 – Awards and Recognition**

There were no presentations during the 424<sup>th</sup> meeting.

**Item 21– Public Comment**

Public comment for regulation proposals was made at the time of the rule discussion and during the public comment agenda item.

**Item 22 – Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 12:12PM.