

Role of the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC)

The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) is the state's lead agency for all animal issues in disasters, whether natural or man-made. The TAHC is also the primary response agency for foreign and emerging diseases in livestock and poultry. Prior to a disease or disaster event, the TAHC conducts planning, coordinates trainings, and works to ensure the state's preparedness to protect the livestock and poultry industry, as well as household pets.

Texas leads the nation in cattle and sheep and goat production. Livestock and poultry commodity product exports total \$1.5 billion annually.

Protecting Texas livestock and poultry health plays an important role in ensuring marketability of Texas animals and making sure consumers have a safe and abundant food supply. In addition, it is well recognized that providing for the needs of animals in disasters affects public safety in several ways. People may refuse to evacuate or try to re-enter dangerous areas if they are not allowed to take their animals with them. Additionally, displaced animals after a disaster can pose a threat to first responders. Animals must be considered in all phases of planning, response and recovery.



During livestock and poultry foreign animal disease outbreaks, the TAHC, in coordination with U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), leads a number of activities to stop the spread of disease. In addition, the TAHC works closely with the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) when diseases affect both livestock and people.

During natural disaster responses, the TAHC assists local jurisdictions through the state emergency management system, conducting animal needs assessments, coordinating disposal activities, and addressing evacuation and sheltering issues through various resources and partnerships.

In order to accomplish the planning, response and recovery activities required to protect livestock and household pets, the TAHC partners with different entities before, during, and after disasters.

TAHC partners with jurisdictions through:

- Interfacing with local emergency operations centers
- Supporting local animal issues committee planning activities

- Developing local animal issues planning materials
- Coordinating resources and requests during disasters
- Locating resources and filling personnel gaps as requested
- Maintaining memorandums of understanding with response organizations in order to provide deployable resources at the request of local jurisdictions

TAHC works with local veterinarians by:

- Serving as a liaison during disasters for veterinary needs
- Participating in the Texas Veterinary Medical Association (TVMA) Disaster Preparedness Committee
- Supporting veterinary disaster trainings
- Interacting on a daily basis to protect livestock health by cooperating on animal health program work



TAHC leads the state in animal planning, response and recovery by:

- Staffing Disaster District Committees (DDC)
- Serving as a member of the state emergency management council
- Directing the state animal response team for natural or man-made disasters (*team includes livestock industry organizations,*

state agencies, non-governmental organizations, universities and USDA personnel)

- Coordinating Foreign and Emerging Animal Disease (FEAD) planning, exercises, and response
- Serving as a member of the state Homeland Security Council
- Developing resources, such as the Horseback Response Team, to support local response

In order to ensure that Texas stays on the cutting edge of planning disease and disaster efforts, the TAHC participates in several national working groups:

- United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) - Committee on Agriculture Emergency Management (CAEM)
- National Alliance of State Animal and Agriculture Emergency Programs (NASAAEP)
- Southern Animal and Agriculture Disaster Response Alliance (SAADRA)
- National Institute for Animal Agriculture (NIAA)
- Animal Health Emergency Management Council (AHEM)



**Information provided by the
Texas Animal Health
Commission (TAHC)**

**Contact the following for more
information on disaster
and/or disease planning:**

Texas Animal Health Commission
P.O. Box 12966
Austin, TX 78711-2966
1-800-550-8242

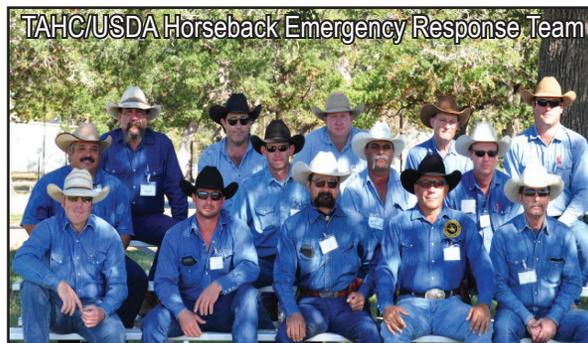
Email: em_info@tahc.texas.gov

Website: www.tahc.texas.gov

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TexasAHC

Twitter: www.twitter.com/TAHC

March 2013



*“Serving Texas Animal Agriculture
Since 1893”*

Emergency Management



Texas Animal Health Commission's Role

Website: www.tahc.texas.gov

Phone: 1-800-550-8242