



TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH PROGRAM TIDBITS



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I usually just pick one topic to discuss for my article, but in trying to decide what to cover for this publication, I realized there were significant current events taking place for a number of the animal species the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) regulates. So here we go with a few tidbits on many different topics.

The poultry world is still reeling from the High Path Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak that devastated turkey flocks and chicken egg layers across the Midwest. That is why your eggs went up so much in the past few months. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) came out with new biosecurity protocols for commercial flocks to follow and is also sampling wild migratory birds across the U.S. We decided not to cancel poultry shows this fall, but we take this threat very seriously.

So far Texas has been lucky in not having HPAI hit our state. Nevertheless, we have spent considerable time revamping our state emergency management response plans and worked closely with the Texas Poultry Federation to re-evaluate their plan in case this disease hits. If so, we will be ready, and if not, well, we will still be ready for next year.

The USDA has announced they will release a new rule for goat scrapie early next year. What this will mean for sure is that all adult goats will need to have official identification applied prior to a goat moving off of a premise or being sold. Producers will be able to get tags from the TAHC and are to apply them prior to moving goats. The sheep scrapie identification program was integral in the success we have seen in eradicating scrapie from that species due to effective traceability, and we anticipate the goat program will be just as successful. Nonetheless, Texas has more than a million goats, and it is one of the fastest growing livestock industries in Texas, so you can anticipate being asked lots of questions about this from both stock show folks and goat producers.

The Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) program has been one of the most successful programs around in diminishing the disease threat for what was an endemic disease. When change of ownership testing started in 1997, Texas found more than 1,000 reactor horses the first year. Texas still has more EIA cases than any other state, but last year we found less than 10 total. One of these days, we won't have to test horses anymore, but we are not quite there yet. The USDA, in its wisdom, has convened a working group to study if we are "close enough" to go ahead and quit. It doesn't make any sense to me at all, but that is the federal government. Please stay tuned, and if the opportunity arises, I encourage all y'all to provide comments to any new USDA rule they might propose. With Mexico to our south and with some horses living into their thirties routinely now, we cannot let up right now in maintaining good surveillance systems. If the USDA stands down on this disease program, I anticipate that TAHC would continue on its rules to protect Texas horses.

We are still finding equine piroplasmiasis (piro) in racing Quarter horses in Texas. It's not that we have more disease necessarily, but this is simply because, along with New Mexico, we are the only states that require a test before a horse enters a track. We have found piro reactors in Texas recently that were running on Louisiana and Oklahoma tracks before coming to Texas, and we are working with those state veterinarians to talk to their industry about resuming testing at their tracks. Don't forget about piro or EIA in any differential diagnosis that includes weak, thin or anemic horses.

The commercial swine industry is being rocked with the second emerging disease in as many years. Last year, it was the corona viruses killing young pigs, and this year, it is Seneca Valley Virus that has grabbed attention. This virus has been around for a while, but now it is causing vesicular lesions and lameness in both slaughter and grower hogs nation-

wide. The symptoms have caused health issues and also slowed down normal swine movements while state officials rule out foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). Don't forget that all vesicular/erosions in swine are reportable. Please read up on this virus if you are not familiar with it.

We continue to work with the cervid industry on how to deal with the newly discovered Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in the white-tail deer breeder industry in Texas. We will be convening a group to study the use of live animal tests after the first of the year, and Texas veterinarians will be at the core of that. We believe that whatever protocol is decided on for Texas, the USDA will pick up as a starting point for a national live animal testing policy.

Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) continues to cause trouble in the dairy industry. At press time, we currently have four dairies quarantined along with two affiliated calf ranch/heifer raiser operations. There are still thousands of trace out animals to find, and it is entirely possible Texas will lose its TB "Free" status again, as we did in 2002. If that happens, beef and dairy cattle will have to have a TB test to cross the state line. That will mean more business for veterinarians and more costs for producers.

Finally, TAHC will be working with TVMA in the next few months to evaluate how to incentivize veterinarians to use more electronic health certificates and fewer paper certificates. This may mean changes in our fees for both. We will also be asking veterinarians to help us derive reasonable rules related to the completion and use of health certificates issued for intrastate movement. TAHC has none at the moment.

I'll stop there, as significant activities related to seven species and the veterinary community are enough to keep us busy for a while. As always, thanks for all you do in protecting the animal health of Texas. [TV](#)