RESOLUTION NUMBER: 24 APPROVED

SOURCE: **COMMITTEE ON PARASITIC AND VECTOR-BORNE DISEASES**

SUBJECT MATTER: **Development and Implementation of a Cattle Fever Tick Control Program in Mexican States Bordering Texas**

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program (CFTEP), established in 1906, is the oldest livestock pest eradication program in the nation. CFTEP's mission is to eradicate fever ticks from the United States and to prevent re-establishment of cattle fever ticks in the United States. A permanent quarantine zone was established along the Texas side of the Rio Grande in 1943. Cattle fever ticks were eradicated from Texas in 1946, except for incursions across the river into the permanent quarantine zone and the free areas of Texas.

The establishment of the permanent fever tick quarantine zone in 1943, created a buffer zone between Mexico and the rest of the United States to prevent and/or limit the incursion of fever ticks into the fever tick "free" areas of country. Since that time, successful maintenance of the permanent quarantine zone has been based on the systematic inspection and treatment of cattle maintained within the zone to detect and eradicate incursions of fever ticks from endemically infested wildlife hosts and cattle from Mexico. From the onset of the CFTEP, 100 percent treatment of all cattle on infested premises has proven to be the most effective method of eradicating cattle fever ticks. The successful eradication of fever ticks from the United States in 1946, was primarily attributable to the 100 percent treatment requirement.

However, in the last twenty years, factors such as changes in land use transitioning away from cattle production to wildlife, recreational uses, and increasing wildlife populations, especially white-tailed deer, elk, red deer and Nilgai antelope, have complicated and challenged fever tick eradication efforts and thus, successful maintenance of the permanent quarantine zone. The CFTEP has incorporated additional treatment and preventative treatment methodologies, such as ivermectin-treated corn for treating white-tailed deer, treatment of cattle with doramectin, and the use of a fever tick vaccine in cattle to help offset the impact of these challenges, but has not completely mitigated the challenges because there are not any available treatments for fever tick infested Nilgai antelope and some other cattle fever tick hosts.

Despite the incorporation of new methodologies into the existing eradication program, fever tick infestations, both within and outside of the permanent quarantine zone, are expanding. The largest contributing factor to the expansion is the fever tick burden present on Mexican origin wildlife and livestock populations located along the Rio Grande in Mexico. Mexico does not have a fever tick eradication or control program that would decrease the fever tick population/burden on wildlife and livestock on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande. When coupled with the inadequacy of the Rio Grande river as a barrier, especially, for cattle fever tick infested wildlife, the unchecked fever tick population in Mexico will continue to cross the Rio Grande on infested wildlife and livestock, overwhelming the capability of the CFTEP to successfully maintain the efficacy of the buffer created by the permanent quarantine zone and resulting in ongoing incursions of fever ticks into the "free" areas of Texas, and potentially the rest of the United States.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association urges the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service and Agriculture Research Service to collaborate with Mexican National Animal Health Officials, Mexican State Animal Health Officials from the Mexican states that border Texas, and Mexican livestock and wildlife industry representatives to develop and implement a fever tick control or eradication program that will reduce or eliminate the fever tick population along the Mexican side of the Rio Grande river, and thus the threat of fever tick incursion presented by wildlife and livestock populations across the Rio Grande from the permanent quarantine zone in Texas.

INTERIM RESPONSE:

The United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services recognizes the concerns of the United States Animal Health Association and appreciates the opportunity to respond.

In December 2016, APHIS, the Agricultural Research Service, and Mexico hosted a joint Tick Summit attended by Federal and State entities, academia, and industry. During the Summit, APHIS discussed the current status of tick issues in the United States and Mexico, as well as new advances that may help to improve tick programs on both sides of the border. APHIS worked with Mexico to draft a bilateral strategic tick plan, which is undergoing review in both countries prior to formal approval. APHIS and Mexico's Secretariat of Agriculture, Livestock, Rural Development, Fisheries, and Food will roll out the plan to the Bi-National Committee after final approval. To address the threat of fever tick incursion presented by wildlife and livestock populations across the Rio Grande from the permanent quarantine zone in Texas, APHIS proposed to hold a smaller version of the tick summit meeting to discuss available and needed resources.