

Finding of No Significant Impact
Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program Fence Deterrent in
Cameron and Willacy Counties, Texas
Supplemental Environmental Assessment
April 2022

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) prepared a supplemental environmental assessment (EA) analyzing potential environmental consequences associated with the installation of high game and pasture fencing at specific locations in Cameron County, Texas, to prevent or limit the spread of cattle fever ticks by free-ranging wildlife hosts (such as white-tailed deer and nilgai). The supplemental EA, incorporated by reference in this document in its entirety, is available from:

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
Veterinary Services
2150 Centre Avenue, Bldg. B
Fort Collins, CO 80526

Ongoing cattle fever tick eradication efforts in southern Texas include surveillance and patrolling for stray or smuggled tick-infested livestock, treatment of tick-infested animals, and vacating of tick-infested pastures and premises. Unfortunately, these efforts seem to be insufficient given the persistent increasing number of tick-infested premises observed outside of the Permanent Tick Quarantine Zone in recent years, and also given the potential for both the ticks and the bovine disease to spread across the region including Cameron County. Installing high game and pasture fencing, in addition to above-mentioned ongoing eradication efforts, may limit the movements of tick hosts (such as white-tailed deer and nilgai antelope) and eventually contribute to the program's effort to reducing the use of chemicals needed to treat tick-infested cattle, as well as associated animal production costs overall. Therefore, by funding the installation of fencing against potential wildlife tick-hosts, the USDA APHIS VS cattle fever tick eradication program (CFTEP) expects to reduce the risk of the spread of the disease bovine babesiosis among U.S. cattle populations in Southern Texas.

The EA analyzed the alternatives of (A) *no action* under which USDA APHIS VS would not fund the installation of fencing in Cameron County, which would allow the continued spread of cattle fever ticks by infested wildlife ungulates in cattle ranches with the potential of increasing the likelihood of babesiosis outbreaks in U.S. cattle populations and related financial consequences; and (B) *proposed action* under which USDA APHIS VS would fund the

installation of high game and pasture fencing at specific locations in Cameron County to deter the movements of potential wildlife tick-hosts, facilitating current CFTEP efforts.

USDA-APHIS announced the availability of this EA for a 30-day public comment period via two local newspapers in Texas and via *Regulations.gov* (Docket ID APHIS-2022-0021). The comment period ended on April 22, 2022. The agency received no comments on the EA.

USDA-APHIS determined that there are no disproportionate adverse effects associated with the preferred action alternative to children, minority and low-income populations or disadvantaged communities over those effects to the general populations, in accordance with Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations; Executive Order 13985, Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government; Executive Order 14008, Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad; and Executive Order 13045, Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks.

I found that the implementation of the proposed program will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. I have considered and based my finding of no significant impact on the environment on the analysis contained within the EA. Because I have not found evidence of significant environmental impacts associated with the proposed action, I find that an environmental impact statement does not need to be prepared and that the program may proceed.

Dr. Mark Lyons
Acting Director, Ruminant Health Center
Strategy and Policy
Veterinary Services
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

April 25, 2022

Date