Cattle Fever Ticks

Last Modified:



Cattle fever ticks (*Rhipicephalus (Boophilus) annulatus* and *R. (B.) microplus*) are the most dangerous cattle ectoparasites in the United States. These ticks have been a threat to American agriculture for generations because they spread the disease bovine babesiosis, commonly called cattle fever.

Often fatal, this disease caused enormous losses to the U.S. cattle industry in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Direct and indirect economic losses were estimated at

$130.5 million—more than $3 billion today. The disease was eradicated from the United States by 1943, except for a permanent quarantine area along the Texas/Mexico border, where cattle fever ticks are still found.

What To Look For

Cattle fever ticks typically attach themselves to the skin inside an animal's thigh, flanks, and forelegs or along the belly and brisket.

Cattle fever ticks develop through three life stages while on the host animal: larva, nymph, and adult.

Potential hosts of cattle fever ticks include livestock (mainly cattle and horses), white-tailed deer, and exotic hoofstock, such as nilgai antelope and red deer. Cattle fever ticks do not often attach to people.

View Cattle Fever Tick Pest Alert

How To Prevent This Pest

APHIS or the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) inspects all livestock within the permanent quarantine zone for ticks every year. APHIS or TAHC inspectors also treat, inspect, and certify all cattle as tick-free before they can move out of the quarantine zone to prevent ticks from spreading. In addition, APHIS and TAHC set up temporary quarantines as needed if the ticks are found outside of the permanent quarantine zone.

If you have questions about your livestock and potential tick infestations, call or email APHIS or TAHC:

APHIS Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program
Email: feverticks@usda.gov
Phone: 956-726-2228
Texas Animal Health Commission
Email: comments@tahc.texas.gov
Phone: 512-719-0700

How It Is Treated

If your premises is quarantined for cattle fever ticks, Federal and State animal health regulations will require all your livestock, including horses, to be treated. The treatment options vary based on what animals you have and how you plan to use or move the animals. When your premises is quarantined, animal health officials will work with you to develop a herd plan.

View Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program and Treatment Options Brochure

Vea el folleto del programa de erradicación de garrapatas de fiebre bovina y opciones de tratamiento

Report Signs of Animal Disease

Producers or owners who suspect an animal disease should contact their veterinarian to evaluate the animal or herd. Find an accredited veterinarian.

Animal health professionals (veterinarians; diagnostic laboratories; public health, zoo, or wildlife personnel; and others) report diagnosed or suspected cases of nationally listed reportable animal diseases to APHIS Area Veterinarians in Charge and to the State animal health official as applicable under State reporting regulations.

Story Map: Highlights of Veterinary Services' Cattle Fever Tick Program Story Map

This is a story about the introduction, spread, and eventual containment of cattle fever ticks in the United States between 1800 and today.

Learn More



Controlling Cattle Fever Ticks

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Current Status

Today, cattle fever ticks are somewhat confined to a permanent quarantine zone (206.88 KB) that runs from Brownsville to Del Rio, TX, along the Mexican border. Mexico continues to find babesiosis, so this buffer zone plays an important role in keeping ticks from spreading the disease back into the United States.

Other populations of cattle fever ticks are found in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. APHIS helps support local programs in those areas.

View the Cattle Fever Tick Research Milestones Brochure
Ver los hitos de la investigación sobre las garrapatas fiebre del ganado

APHIS' Response

APHIS leads the Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program, a cooperative effort started with the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) and cattle industry in 1906 to rid the country of cattle fever.

APHIS and TAHC work together to systematically detect, treat, and eradicate cattle fever tick infestations.

- We inspect all livestock within the permanent quarantine zone for ticks every year.
- We also require all cattle to be treated, inspected, and certified as tick-free before they can move out of the quarantine zone.
- If ticks are found outside of the quarantine zone, we set up temporary quarantines as needed. These animals must also be treated and inspected before leaving quarantine.

In addition, APHIS has a cadre of “tick riders" (horse-mounted patrol inspectors) who ride along the Texas/Mexico border. They look for signs of stray or smuggled livestock from Mexico that might carry fever ticks into the United States. Intercepted animals are inspected, treated, and quarantined.

View Highlights of the Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program

Regulatory Information

Texas Administrative Code: Title 4, Part 2, Chapter 41: Texas Animal Health Commission: Fever Ticks

Disease Information Sheets

Bovine Anaplasmosis Information Sheet (233.33 KB) (January 2024)

Bovine Babesiosis Information Sheet (342.2 KB) (January 2024)

Reports and Assessments

Title	Documents	Month/Year Published
Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program Fence Deterrent in Kenedy County, Texas	Final Environmental Assessment (1.18 MB) Finding of No Significant Impact (289.64 KB)	December 2025
Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program Use of Arkion Fly and Tick Spray	Final Environmental Assessment (1.84 MB) Finding of No Significant Impact (255.46 KB)	August 2025
Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program Use of Ivermectin-treated Corn in 41 Counties, Texas	Final Environmental Assessment (6.1 MB) Finding of No Significant Impact (332.61 KB)	July 2025
Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program Fence Deterrent in Cameron and Willacy Counties, Texas	Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment (2.08 MB) Finding of No Significant Impact (English) (310 KB)	May 2025
Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program Fence Deterrent in Cameron and Starr Counties, Texas	Final Environmental Assessment (7.14 MB) Finding of No Significant Impact (316.68 KB) Hallazgo de que no hay impacto significativo (280.5 KB)	July 2024
Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program Fence Deterrent in Cameron and Zapata Counties, Texas	Final Environmental Assessment (2.04 MB) Finding of No Significant Impact (316.12 KB)	March 2023

Title	Documents	Month/Year Published
Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program Fence Deterrent in Cameron and Willacy Counties, Texas	Final Supplemental Environmental Assessment (7.01 MB) Finding of No Significant Impact (for Supplemental EA) (228.88 KB) Revised Finding of No Significant Impact (533.75 KB) (May 2024)	April 2022
	Final Environmental Assessment (2.68 MB) Finding of No Significant Impact (for Final EA) (124.79 KB)	July 2021
Cattle Fever Tick Eradication on Laguna Atascosa and Lower Rio Grande Valley National Wildlife Refuges	Final Environmental Assessment (5.81 MB) Finding of No Significant Impact (310.07 KB)	February 2018
Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program Use of Ivermectin Corn	Final Environmental Assessment (1.62 MB) Finding of No Significant Impact (346.94 KB)	January 2017

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