



## For More Information

If you have questions, contact the Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program or Texas Animal Health Commission.

### **USDA APHIS Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program**

120 San Francisco Ave.  
Laredo, TX 78040  
Email: [feverticks@usda.gov](mailto:feverticks@usda.gov)  
Phone: (956) 726-2228

### **Texas Animal Health Commission** (main office)

2105 Kramer Lane  
Austin, TX 78758  
Email: [comments@tahc.texas.gov](mailto:comments@tahc.texas.gov)  
Phone: (512) 719-0700

## PROTECTING U.S. CATTLE FROM FEVER TICKS

# Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program and Treatment Options



The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is responsible for protecting the health of American agriculture, including our livestock industries. As part of our mission, APHIS leads the **Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program**, a cooperative effort started in 1906, to rid the country of a serious cattle disease called babesiosis. The program depends on Federal and State animal health officials, the cattle industry, and producers working together to prevent the spread of this tick-borne illness.

Commonly called cattle fever, babesiosis causes cattle to lose weight, produce less milk, and even die. The disease caused enormous losses to the cattle industry in the past. Before the eradication program began, direct and indirect economic losses were estimated to be \$130.5 million—more than \$3 billion today. USDA and its partners worked together to eradicate the disease from the country by 1943, except for a permanent quarantine area along the Texas/Mexico border where the ticks that carry this disease are still found. 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.

USDA works closely with the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) to carry out cattle fever tick eradication efforts. USDA manages the permanent quarantine area, while TAHC facilitates temporary quarantines on infested premises in counties north of the permanent zone. Both agencies are involved with treatment and inspection activities, and they work out of joint offices in some locations.







## How the Program Works

USDA or TAHC inspects all livestock within the permanent quarantine zone for ticks every year. USDA or TAHC inspectors must 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, USDA and TAHC set up temporary quarantines as needed if the ticks are found outside of the permanent quarantine zone. These animals must also be treated and inspected before leaving quarantine.

There are separate rules for releasing the temporary quarantines and returning the land to normal status. If you have questions about that process, contact USDA or TAHC officials.

To help combat the spread of ticks, USDA also has a cadre of “tick riders,” or mounted patrol inspectors, who ride along the Texas/Mexico border looking for livestock that stray across the border. They round up any stray livestock they find, inspect them for ticks, and then treat them before returning them to their owners.

## What You Need To Know About Treatments

If your premises is quarantined for cattle fever ticks, Federal and State animal health regulations require all of 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.

In general, the treatment options mentioned below are currently available. USDA and TAHC are researching additional options for use in livestock and wildlife. If proven to be safe and effective, these will be made available as well.

If you are looking to move or sell your animals out of a quarantined area, regulations spell out which treatments you need to complete and when you need to complete them. The options are more limited because of required treatment withdrawal periods. Animals moving within Texas must follow TAHC regulations. Animals leaving Texas for another State must follow State and USDA regulations.

All quarantined premises must have a herd plan in place, even if it is not signed. Please consult with State or Federal animal health officials when developing your herd plan and before treatment begins. This will help you determine which treatment protocol is best and ensure that you meet all requirements.

## Cattle Treatment Options

### OPTION 1 • Dipping Vats

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Most producers treat their cattle by running them through a dipping vat every 14 days. This treatment uses the chemical coumaphos, which has no withdrawal period.

Dipping vats are located throughout the permanent quarantine area for ranchers to use. USDA personnel oversee the dipping vats to ensure they are used correctly to kill ticks.

If you cannot bring your herd to a public dipping vat due to distance, portable dipping vats may be available for large herds (more than 100 cattle). USDA personnel bring these dipping vats to your premises and oversee their use.



### OPTION 2 • Spray Treatments

USDA or TAHC personnel can also bring a spray box to your location if you cannot or choose not to use the dipping vats. These treatments also use coumaphos and are done every 14 days.

Hand-held sprayers may be used on animals that are unable to enter the spray box due to size or physical condition. If you want to hand-spray more animals than deemed necessary by USDA or TAHC, you must assume responsibility for any additional treatments. This includes adhering to the coumaphos label requirements as well as all requirements set forth by TAHC and the Texas Department of Agriculture, which licenses pesticide applicators. In addition, the treatments must meet USDA standards for efficacy.



### OPTION 3 • Injectable Treatments

If animal health officials determine that your herd is eligible to use injectable treatments, USDA or TAHC personnel can provide injectable treatments at your premises. These treatments use doramectin and are given every 25–28 days. These animals may not move out of the quarantined area during the 35-day withdrawal period after their last injection.

### Cattle Vaccine

All adult cattle in the permanent quarantine area must be vaccinated at least once a year with an anti-tick vaccine, in combination with any other treatments in your herd plan. USDA will come to your premises to provide the vaccine.

The vaccine will help reduce the number of ticks overall, but it is not 100% effective. In fact, there are two types of fever ticks, and the vaccine is more effective against one type of fever tick than the other. The vaccine is currently approved for cattle but is still being studied in horses. USDA is also researching additional vaccine options.

### Horse Treatment Option

There is only one treatment option approved for use in horses: a spray treatment with coumaphos. Horses can be treated every 14 days. Animals that move infrequently should be treated when they move out of or back into quarantine. USDA or TAHC personnel provide treatments at designated locations and times to serve multiple owners or may bring the spray to your premises.

### Wildlife Treatment Option

There is only one treatment available for use specifically in white-tailed deer. Regulatory officials may feed deer ivermectin-treated corn, but only between the months of February through July. This allows for a 60-day withdrawal period before hunting season begins. USDA and TAHC manage this effort together.

### Preventive Treatment

If your animals are not quarantined, you may choose to treat them preventively. If this is something you wish to do, contact USDA or TAHC for guidance about approved treatment options and frequencies.