

# Factsheet

## Cattle Fever Ticks – Proper Treatment and Management of Wildlife Species

Cattle fever tick (CFT) species (*Rhipicephalus (R.) annulatus* and *R. microplus*) can serve as vectors to spread a serious cattle disease called bovine babesiosis or “cattle fever.” Cattle infected with cattle fever lose weight and produce less milk, eventually leading to death. This caused significant economic losses for the cattle industry in years past.

To protect the U.S. cattle industry from this disease, APHIS leads the Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program (CFTEP). The CFTEP is a cooperative effort started in 1906 to rid the country of CFTs. The program depends on Federal and State animal health officials, the cattle industry, and producers working together to prevent the spread of cattle fever.

Our joint efforts eradicated cattle fever ticks from the U.S., with the exception of a Permanent Quarantine Zone along the U.S.-Mexico border. While we no longer have the disease, Mexico continues to find babesiosis. The reintroduction of bovine babesiosis from a new invasion of CFTs could cause major economic losses once again, so this buffer zone is important in keeping ticks from spreading the disease back into the United States.

### Wildlife Can Spread Cattle Fever Ticks

Wildlife species, such as white-tailed deer and nilgai antelope, serve as hosts for both cattle fever tick species. Both free-ranging and captive wildlife species can carry these ticks. Wildlife populations in South Texas are increasing in both numbers and types of species. This is a challenge for our eradication efforts, because it increases the chance of exposing livestock to the ticks.



### Monitoring Wildlife

CFTEP requires wildlife species that can serve as CFT hosts to be handled carefully to prevent potential spread of cattle fever ticks if they are located within quarantine premises or inside a quarantine area. Prior to leaving a quarantined premises or quarantine area, all deer, nilgai and other exotic wildlife animals – as well as their

products (ie. deer capes) – that can be hosts for CFTs must be inspected. Inspections must be coordinated with the USDA and Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) in a timely fashion. Once the inspector determines the animals are free of ticks, TAHC provides a movement permit. As a preventative measure animals must also be treated prior to movement.

### **Treatment Options**

Developing CFT treatment options for both native and exotic wildlife species is a challenge. Ranchers can treat white-tailed deer by feeding ivermectin-treated corn to their herds. Currently, there is no approved treatment protocol for nilgai antelope.

If deer or exotic wildlife species share land with cattle or other CFT hosts, be sure to inspect and treat *all* animals on the property for CFTs.



### **How You Can Help**

Cooperation from native and exotic wildlife ranchers and harvesters is essential. Your efforts will help prevent cattle fever ticks from spreading outside of the quarantine area. Here are some best practices:

- Installing high fencing for penned white tailed deer or exotics will help contain these tick hosts.
- Be aware of increased pesticide resistance in cattle fever tick populations. Use pesticides only as labeled and consult your local veterinarian or state officials with questions.
- Routinely inspect your animals. This is vital if your premises is quarantined. If you are outside the quarantine zone, your efforts will help monitor for any cattle fever ticks that might appear.

### **For More Information**

If you suspect a cattle fever tick infestation or have further questions regarding cattle fever ticks, please contact your local TAHC region office which can be found at:

<https://www.tahc.texas.gov/agency/TAHCRegionOfficeMap.pdf>