

**Finding Of No Significant Impact**  
**Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program Use of Ivermectin-treated Corn**  
**in 41 Counties, Texas**

**Final Environmental Assessment**  
**UID: EAXX-005-32-24V-1734008235**  
**July 2025**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), Veterinary Services (VS) has prepared an environmental assessment (EA) to evaluate the potential environmental effects on the human environment from the use of ivermectin-treated corn to control tick vectors of cattle fever by the USDA APHIS Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program (CFTEP) in 41 counties in South Texas. Ivermectin, an antiparasitic agent, has been used with whole kernel corn as a bait system in feeding stations to deliver a systematically active acaricide to white-tailed deer that are hosts of cattle fever ticks (CFTs). The aim is to strategically place treated corn in feeders on public and private lands to reduce tick populations on white-tailed deer, thereby controlling CFTs. This is especially relevant in counties where CFTs have been detected, or where there is a risk of infestation due to deer movements.

The EA that analyzed the potential environmental effects of this program is incorporated by reference in this document and is available on the APHIS Veterinary Services Tick Disease Information website (<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/livestock-poultry-disease/cattle/ticks/cattle-fever>) or from:

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

Ongoing efforts to eradicate CFTs in southern Texas are challenged by persistent outbreaks outside the Permanent Tick Quarantine Zone, suggesting current strategies are insufficient. Given the role of white-tailed deer as a CFT reservoir, an integrated approach incorporating medicated food baits, such as ivermectin-treated corn, offers a promising solution. This method has proven effective in eradicating outbreaks in previous instances, including at Port Mansfield and the East Foundation El Sauz Ranch. Therefore, by funding an ivermectin-treated corn program, initially targeting 11 counties (Cameron, Hidalgo, Jim Wells, Kinney, Live Oak, Maverick, Starr, Val Verde, Webb, Willacy, and Zapata Counties) and expanding to 30 additional neighboring counties (Aransas, Atascosa, Bandera, Bee, Bexar, Brooks, Calhoun, Dimmit, Duval, Edwards, Frio, Goliad, Jim Hogg, Karnes, Kendall, Kenedy, Kerr, Kleberg, La Salle, McMullen, Medina, Nueces, Real, Refugio, San Patricio, Terrell, Uvalde, Victoria, Wilson, and Zavala), the USDA APHIS CFTEP aims to mitigate the risk of bovine babesiosis transmission to livestock in South Texas.

USDA APHIS evaluated the following two alternatives within its EA:

Alternative A, the No Action option, entailed maintaining the current ivermectin-treated corn feeding program within the initial 11 counties and continuing existing CFT control methods, such as livestock inspections, patrolling, vacating of premises, quarantine, and pesticide application on cattle.

Alternative B, the Proposed Action (preferred), involves expanding the ivermectin-treated corn program from 11 to 41 counties to improve the program effectiveness and eradicate CFTs regionally.

On October 17, 2016, USDA APHIS prepared a Biological Assessment (BA) for listed and proposed species and designated critical habitats that could occur in proximity to ivermectin-treated corn feeders in Cameron, Hidalgo, Jim Wells, Kenedy, Kinney, Kleberg, Live Oak, Maverick, Starr, Val Verde, Webb, Willacy, and Zapata Counties (Consultation No. 02ETTX0-2016-F-0590). The BA was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Texas Coastal Ecological Services Field Office, which issued a Biological Opinion (BO) on January 24, 2017. The BO indicated that the proposed use of ivermectin-treated corn in feeding stations will not likely jeopardize the continued existence of the identified species. USFWS included terms and conditions in the BO outlining APHIS' reporting and monitoring requirements. This BA and the resulting BO are part of the administrative record for this EA, and all relevant information from this 2016–2017 consultation is incorporated here by reference.

USDA APHIS prepared a revised BA to address an expansion of ivermectin-treated corn feeders by the CFTEP to a 41-county program area and formally requested a reinitiation of consultation with USFWS. The purpose of the revised BA was to update the 2017 BA by including additional species and critical habitats that have been listed or proposed since 2017, as well as to add 28 counties to the program area. To support this effort, USDA APHIS requested an official species list through the USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system on December 3, 2024 (Project Code: 2025-002640) and submitted the revised BA to USFWS on January 6, 2025.

USDA APHIS determined that the use of ivermectin-treated corn may affect, but is not likely to adversely affect, the following species: Attwater's greater prairie-chicken (*Tympanuchus cupido attwateri*); cactus ferruginous pygmy-owl (*Glaucidium brasilianum cactorum*); Mexican spotted owl (*Strix occidentalis lucida*)—with no effect on its critical habitat; southwestern willow flycatcher (*Empidonax traillii extimus*)—with no effect on its critical habitat; fountain darter (*Etheostoma fonticola*) and its critical habitat; Mexican blindcat (*Prietella phreatophila*); false spike (*Fusconaia mitchelli*) and its critical habitat; Balcones spike (*Fusconaia iheringi*)—with no effect on its critical habitat; Mexican fawnsfoot (*Truncilla cognata*) and its proposed critical habitat; Salina mucket (*Potamilus metnecktayi*) and its proposed critical habitat; Texas fatmucket (*Lampsilis bracteata*)—with no effect on its critical habitat; Texas hornshell (*Popenaias popeii*) and its proposed critical habitat; Texas pimpleback (*Cyclonaias petrina*) and its critical habitat; the *Rhadine exilis* and *Rhadine infernalis* beetles and their critical habitats; Helotes mold beetle (*Batrissodes venyivi*) and its critical habitat; Cokendolpher Cave harvestman (*Texella cokendolpheri*) and its critical habitat; Government Canyon Bat Cave meshweaver (*Cicurina vespera*) and its critical habitat; Government Canyon Bat Cave spider (*Tayshaneta microps*) and its critical habitat; Madla Cave meshweaver (*Cicurina madla*) and its critical habitat; Robber

Baron Cave meshweaver (*Cicurina baronia*) and its critical habitat; bracted twistflower (*Streptanthus bracteatus*) and its critical habitat; bushy whitlow-wort (*Paronychia congesta*) and its critical habitat; prostrate milkweed (*Asclepias prostrata*)—with no effect on its critical habitat; and slender rush-pea (*Hoffmannseggia tenella*).

USDA APHIS further determined that the use of ivermectin-treated corn will not jeopardize the continued existence of the monarch butterfly (*Danaus plexippus*) and will have no effect on its proposed critical habitat, as no proposed critical habitat occurs within the program area. Similarly, the use of ivermectin-treated corn will have no effect on the tricolored bat (*Perimyotis subflavus*); eastern black rail (*Laterallus jamaicensis jamaicensis*); piping plover [Atlantic Coast and Northern Great Plains Distinct Population Segments (DPS)] (*Charadrius melodus*) and its critical habitat; rufa red knot (*Calidris canutus rufa*) and its proposed critical habitat; yellow-billed cuckoo [western DPS] (*Coccyzus americanus*) and its critical habitat; green sea turtle [North Atlantic DPS] (*Chelonia mydas*); San Marcos salamander (*Eurycea nana*) and its critical habitat; Texas blind salamander (*Eurycea* (= *Typhlomolge*) *rathbuni*); Austin blind salamander (*Eurycea waterlooensis*) and its critical habitat; Houston toad (*Bufo houstonensis*) and its critical habitat; fountain darter (*Etheostoma fonticola*) and its critical habitat; Comal Springs dryopid beetle (*Stygoparnus comalensis*) and its critical habitat; Comal Springs riffle beetle (*Heterelmis comalensis*) and its critical habitat; Peck's cave amphipod (*Stygobromus* (= *Stygonectes*) *pecki*) and its critical habitat; bunched cory cactus (*Coryphantha ramillosa*); and Texas wild-rice (*Zizania texana*) and its critical habitat.

USDA APHIS received a letter of concurrence from the USFWS dated February 26, 2025, agreeing with these effect determinations (Project Number 2025-002640). This revised BA for the expanded 41-county program area and letter from USFWS are included in the administrative record for this EA.

USDA APHIS complies with Executive Order (EO) 13045, “Protection of Children from Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks,” by evaluating the potential risks and ensuring child safety in its proposed actions. The agency also adheres to EO 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency,” by taking reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access and participation in its programs and decision-making processes for individuals with limited English proficiency.

USDA APHIS sought public comments on the EA during a 30-day comment period from June 2 to July 2, 2025, announced through local Texas newspapers and [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) (APHIS-2025-0016-0001), but received no feedback.

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.

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Veterinary Services  
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U.S. Department of Agriculture

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Date