Finding of No Significant Impact
Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program Fence Deterrent in Cameron and Willacy Counties, Texas Environmental Assessment
July 2021

In May 2021, USDA-APHIS completed an environmental assessment (EA) relative to the installation of high game fencing at specific locations in Cameron and Willacy Counties, Texas to prevent or limit the spread of cattle fever ticks by free-ranging wildlife hosts (such as white-tailed deer and nilgai) north of the Texas Southern border known as Permanent Tick Quarantine Zone (PTQZ). 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 PTQZ in recent years, and also given the potential for both the ticks and the bovine disease to spread across the region including Cameron and Willacy Counties. Installing high game 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 in 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 high game fencing against potential wildlife tick-hosts, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS), Veterinary Services (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 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

The EA analyses the alternatives of (A) *no action* under which USDA-APHIS would not fund the installation of high game fencing in Cameron and Willacy Counties, which would then cause 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 would fund the installation of high game fencing at specific locations in Cameron and Willacy Counties 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 local newspapers in Texas and via *Regulations.gov*. The comment period ended on June 30, 2021. 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 populations, or low-income populations 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; 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.

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Dr. Cristopher A. Young **Date**

Director, Ruminant Health Center

Strategy and Policy

Veterinary Services

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service