



The Bexar County Beef Cattle Newsletter

March - 2004

Private Applicator Training

Bexar County Extension Office will be conducting a Private Application Training on Thursday, March 4th beginning at 8:30 a.m. located at 3355 Cherry Ridge Dr., Ste 212. Class is \$25.00 which includes the study manual.

U.S. Meat Supply Safe; Disease Surveillance System Works

The presumptive diagnosis of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in one cow in the state of Washington has proven the U.S.' disease surveillance system is working, resulting in a meat supply that is safe, reports Dr. Bob Hillman, Texas' state veterinarian and head of the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC), the state's livestock and poultry health regulatory agency. BSE is commonly nicknamed "mad cow disease," because infected cattle stumble, become unable to walk, develop head jerking and sensitivity to light as the fatal disease progresses. Dr. Hillman stressed that BSE is in no way related to foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), a fast-moving virus that causes cloven-hooved animals, such as cows, pigs or sheep, to develop blisters around their mouth, teats or hooves.

Dr. Hillman said the 4 1/2-year -old dairy cow in Washington was slaughtered Dec. 9 at a small processing plant near Yakima. Brain and nervous tissue samples were collected from the animal and tested for BSE, because the cow was unable to stand, a problem apparently resulting from recent calving. Positive presumptive test results on the cow were announced Dec. 23, and tissue samples were forwarded to the world's BSE reference laboratory in England for confirmatory testing, a process that should take about a week.

"At least 23 countries, including Canada, have had at least one confirmed case of BSE in domestic cattle since the disease was initially seen in the United Kingdom in 1986," said Dr. Hillman. "From all evidence, it appears the disease is transmitted through feed supplements comprised of rendered by-products from an infected animal. As knowledge about this emerging disease has been gained, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), in concert with other food-related agencies, states and industry associations have implemented regulations and safeguards to protect our livestock and meat supply." Dr. Hillman pointed out preventative and surveillance efforts:

- * since 1989, the U.S. has prohibited the importation of live animals and products from countries that have had confirmed cases of the disease.

- * banning the feeding of rendered by-products from ruminants (such as cattle and sheep) back to ruminants since August 1997.

- * testing of brain tissue of more than 57,000 cattle in the U.S. since 1990. More than 20,000 of these tests were conducted in federal fiscal year 2003.

Until Dec. 23, 2003, when positive presumptive test results were completed on the Washington state cow, all tests have been negative. Part of the national BSE plan includes targeted disease testing on cattle that exhibit central nervous system disorders or are unable to rise or walk normally.

"Our US surveillance testing is significantly greater than that recommended by the Office of International Epizootics, the organization that establishes international animal health standards," said Dr. Hillman. Dr. Hillman said the U.S. is following its BSE plan, put in place and improved on since 1996. The herd of origin of the cow in Washington has been identified and quarantined. USDA and Washington animal health officials will determine the appropriate disposition of the herd upon completion of the disease investigation. Food officials are recalling products which may contain meat from the animal, although the BSE organism has never been detected in milk or beef muscle tissue. The exhaustive epidemiological investigation will examine all aspects of the disease occurrence, including feed sources, in order to gain insight on how the cow became infected and if other herds in Washington--or other states--may be at risk. Dr. Hillman said the TAHC will receive frequent updates on the investigation and will share information as quickly as possible.

"As difficult and unfortunate as this situation is, we do know the disease surveillance system is working," said Dr. Hillman. "In Texas, animals will continue to be monitored for BSE, and the USDA and TAHC will work with private veterinary practitioners and producers to investigate potential disease occurrences. For BSE, that would include cattle that exhibit central nervous system disorders, or those unable to rise or walk." Dr. Hillman explained that the TAHC operates a 24-hour hotline, which can be accessed by calling 1-800-550-8242. "The U.S. meat supply remains safe for consumers, because agencies, producers and livestock associations are willing to address disease problems openly," said Dr. Hillman. "I encourage consumers to enjoy a steak, roast or tall glass of milk tonight, and know that every rational and scientifically based effort is being made to ensure the wholesomeness of our products." See the USDA's web page at: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/bse.html>, for more information regarding BSE.



Future of Cattle Marketing is Due for Changes

By Nathan Riggs

Mr. Ken Jordan of Jordan Cattle Company in San Saba was kind enough to speak at the Bexar County Beef Cattle Short Course on January 22, 2004. After chasing him for the past couple of years, our schedules finally meshed together. Ken's talk centered on a wide variety of topics including the recent BSE (Mad Cow Disease) case in Washington State, new USDA rules regarding cattle feeding, slaughter and processing, producing beef for today's consumer and a proposed national cattle ID system.

Jordan Cattle Company is widely known as an innovator in the field of cattle marketing, especially in the premium stocker and feeder calf market. Premium calves are weaned, backgrounded for 45 days prior to the sale, have all of their shots, eartagged, castrated and perhaps branded...all of this before being brought to the sale barn for auction. Premium calves will bring \$5 to \$7 more per hundred than calves not prepared in the above manner. Once at the sale barn, Jordan's group will add an electronic eartag to the calves so they can be sorted, and co-mingled with other calves of similar weight, sex, breeding, and background. This allows buyers to purchase calves in uniform lots, and allows the sellers to receive higher prices for their calves based on the pen average versus individual animals. The electronic eartag also allows the calf to be tracked from the sale barn to the slaughter plant and its carcass data be entered in a database for analysis.

In his talk, Mr. Jordan spoke of the BSE (Mad Cow disease) scare in December 23, 2003 and how fortunate the U.S. markets were due to the timing of this event. Markets at Christmas usually close down, and very few cattle move during the period. Jordan also conveyed the apprehension and nervousness felt by marketers and cattle buyers prior to the initial sale barn auctions during the first week of 2004. Calves that were feared to sell for \$20 to \$30 per hundredweight sold for nearly the same prices as before the BSE announcement in December. What a relief! Mr. Jordan credits the American public for being educated on the topic and not panicking.

As a result of the BSE scare, the USDA has instated some new rules regarding cattle entering the food chain. One rule covers the marketing and sale of "downer" cows. Per USDA, "downer" cows are no longer allowed to be slaughtered for food or even sold at auctions. "Downer" cows cannot walk or are very weak, or in very bad condition and may be feared to go down. As a result, auctions will now reject "downer" cows; Mr. Jordan suggests selling older cows or cattle with eye or other physical problems BEFORE the problem becomes acute. This will allow the cattle owner to receive some sort of value for the animal rather than waiting for it to become a "downer" and PAYING the rendering truck to pick it up later.

Another rule that appears to be on the horizon, involves the age of calves being sold, especially heifer calves. According to research and previous data on BSE in cattle, no BSE infections have been detected or have affected animals younger than 30 months of age. With this in mind, all animals that are sold at auction that are older than 30 months will be sent to the feedlot and fed normally but will be slaughtered for hamburger only. Cattle slaughtered that are older than 30 months will have their brain, spinal cord, and small intestines removed and not used for products containing those organs or tissues. These same organs and tissues on animals under 30 months will be processed normally.

In addition to feedlot restrictions, heifers and possibly steers older than 30 months will soon be sold at mature animal prices rather than higher calf prices. With this in mind, Mr. Jordan suggests that commercial producers sell their heifers instead of raising them to breed, and buy bred replacements instead because the values are so much different.

Jordan also credited the Adkins diet, poultry producers and nutritional science for the recent increase in cattle prices. The Adkins diet advocates higher protein consumption (of which beef is a major part) of meats, eggs and other proteins. In a strange parallel, Ken credited the poultry industry's wide variety of chicken cuts and products as a stimulus for the beef industry to follow. He mentioned pre-cooked beef products and other marketing strategies as proof of this.

For years, beef was hailed as unhealthy and its popularity through the 1980's and 1990's fell dramatically, giving rise to poultry and fish products. As new scientific studies on beef revealed its true health benefits and use in new dietary menus, beef has rebounded. As a result of this, beef producers (both commercial and seedstock) should strive for an animal with good carcass traits and marketability for what today's consumers desire.

As any commercial cattle producer in South Texas knows, animals with a small amount of Brahman blood are more heat, insect, and disease tolerant than pure English or Continental cattle. Jordan mentions that calves with 1/4 or less Brahman blood will perform well in the South Texas climate and still produce the carcasses desired by feedlot managers and the consuming public. What this means is that brood cows should contain a maximum of 1/2 Brahman blood and be bred to non-Brahman bull. Theoretically, the opposite could also work by using a 1/2 or less Brahman-influenced bull on non-Brahman brood cows. Truly, each cattle producer knows what works best and are free to choose which way to proceed.

Mr. Jordan is part of a national task force that met on January 27, 2004 in Phoenix, Arizona to discuss a national I.D. system for beef and dairy cattle sold in the U.S. Under the proposed system, all cattle operations including farms, auction barns and processing facilities will receive an I.D. number is that unique throughout the U.S. Many processing facilities and auction barns have already received their unique I.D. number. This "Phase I," as the USDA calls it, is due to begin as early as July 2004. This will allow for a maximum 48 hour traceback of diseased animals to their farm of origin to provide quicker animal health protections. Jordan surmises that under the new system, cattle changing ownership will receive an electronic eartag (eID) that contains a unique ID number. This eartag can be read by a special hand-held reader or larger, walk-through readers at farms, auctions, feedlots or processing facilities.

All in all, Ken Jordan's talk provided real hardcore insights into today's and tomorrow's cattle marketing strategies. Producing beef for the consumer while marketing a quality animal is possible for producers in all types of operations for today's market. Mr. Jordan's talk was well worth the wait, and all who attended came away with some tidbit of information that will ultimately improve the way they approach the auction barn or feedlot.

Scientists Clone BSE-Resistant Calves

Korean researchers have succeeded in cloning cows resistant to Bovine spongiform encephalopathy, according to the *Korea Times*. Researchers at Seoul National University inserted mutant prions into cows' eggs that had the nuclei removed and then cultivated the eggs in surrogate cows, the newspaper reported. The team believes the mutant proteins can protect animals from the abnormal prions believed to cause BSE. Four calves were cloned and researchers have impregnated 15 more cows with clones. The calves will be sent to Tsukuba, Japan, for testing, which is expected to take three to five years to complete, the newspaper said. — *meatingplace.com*

Terrorist Threats Prompt TAHC To Recommend Biosecurity Measures

In the wake of recent terrorist bombings overseas, reports of possible terrorist attacks continue to flow into the U.S. Government at a high rate. Increased vigilance is prudent, advises the Texas Animal Health Commission.

Because animal diseases could be used as a weapon to create havoc and damage marketability of products, producers are urged to maintain a close watch on livestock, poultry and property and to report any suspicious persons, vehicles or activities to their local law enforcement officials. TAHC recommends some simple changes you can make to give your animals an extra measure of health protection:

Give “germs” the boot!

You wouldn't think of eating off the floor at the local coffee shop, livestock market, feed store or grocery. But, if you walk around these places in your work boots, and then head home and work with your animals, you may be tracking “germs” on the soles of your shoes to your pasture, animal bedding or any livestock feed you step in. Don't take unwanted “guests” to your animals. Either keep a pair of boots or shoes to wear only on your own premise, or clean and disinfect your footwear before heading out to check on livestock.

Commercial disinfectants are readily available, or you can mix three parts bleach to two parts water in a small, flat tub. A quick scrub of your boots with a long-handled brush will remove manure, mud, or debris, and the bleach or disinfectant will kill viruses, germs and parasites.

Company coming? Ask your visitors and employees to clean their boots, too. If you entertain prospective international buyers, you might even consider providing them with rubber boots that are never removed from your premise.

Where have your hands been? Handling animals at the livestock market? In Great Britain, foot-and-mouth virus was spread at the livestock auction by buyers inspecting the mouths of hundreds of sheep.

Don't haul home disease

Car, truck or trailer tires can harbor “germs,” too. At the livestock market, you've probably driven through manure, mud or muck. Taking a few minutes to spray disinfectant over your tires can kill the “germs” you've picked up in the parking lots, on dirt roads or in a friend's pasture. If you've been hauling livestock in your trailer, a quick trip through the car wash is advisable before returning home.

Bucket brigades and tool trades

Borrowing equipment or tools from a neighbor? Carrying buckets, shovels or wheelbarrows to use at the local fair or exhibit? You can bet you've picked up “germs” at the event. Don't bring these items home until you've washed off the “crud” and sprayed the equipment with disinfectant. Clean and disinfect borrowed items before returning them!

Trash and garbage: Bag It!

Control refuse on your premises. Don't haul home trash or garbage from your office, store or another site unless it's bagged in plastic and sealed.

Never bring home meat scraps to feed livestock. Besides being illegal, feeding meat scraps to pigs, is also a dangerous practice, as viruses and bacteria can be alive in undercooked meat scraps.

Tourist or terrorist?

Be aware of who is on your property! Strangers lurking near your fence line could be innocent tourists admiring the scenery and your stock...or they could have sinister intentions. Ask questions or call the local law enforcement officials. These days, it pays to be alert-and justifiably suspicious!

Friends, family or business associates coming to visit? If they've traveled internationally within the previous week, discourage them from handling your livestock. At the very least, make certain their footwear is disinfected. Some viruses can stay alive for several days on clothing, footwear.

If you've traveled internationally, wash your clothes, shower, and clean your boots before going out to check on livestock or poultry. Better yet, avoid getting near your animals for at least 48 hours after traveling internationally to ensure you don't pass any viruses that may be “harbored” in you nasal passages.

Padlock your perimeter

Lock your gates! Keep feed sacks and veterinary supplies in a secure location. Don't tempt someone to tamper with feed, supplements or medicines.

Taking animals to a show or fair? Don't take chances with feed supplies and equipment at the show grounds. With the increased threat of agricultural terrorism, security is extremely important, particularly where unknown persons have access to livestock or poultry.

Give "germs" space!

Newly acquired animals should be isolated for at least two weeks to ensure you don't introduce disease to your main herd. Although it's not required unless you import animals from out of state, you might consider having your private practitioner inspect animals prior to, or shortly after, making a purchase.

Report signs of disease immediately!

Don't wait to report unusual signs of disease to your private practitioner or the Texas Animal Health Commission! TAHC or U.S. Department of Agriculture practitioner at no charge to take samples for diagnostic testing.

Early reporting is crucial to the health and safety of YOUR herd and to the entire livestock industry! Don't be afraid of crying "wolf". The TAHC operates a 24-hour, toll-free hotline, with veterinarians on call to assess the situation and dispatch a foreign animal disease diagnostician, if the situation warrants. Call 1-800-550-8242 and follow the recorded instructions please.

Texas Dairy Operators, Purebred Cattle Owners: "It's Time to Test!"

Eighty Texas cattle herds--49 dairies and 31 purebred or "seedstock" beef herds--have tested negative for cattle tuberculosis (TB) since November 1, when the state "kicked off" its plan to regain cattle TB-free status. The "free" ranking would allow Texas' 150,000+ ranchers to move cattle across state lines without TB restrictions or testing requirements. Cattle TB is a bacterial infection that can affect an animal's lungs, lymph nodes or other internal organs. The disease can also infect humans, which is one of the reasons for the national disease eradication effort.

"At their meeting December 3 in Austin, the 12 governor-appointed TAHC commissioners reiterated their responsibility to require testing and their commitment to complete the Texas TB plan, the vehicle which will enable our state to regain TB-free status," said Dr. Bob Hillman, head of the TAHC, the state's livestock and poultry health regulatory agency. "TAHC commissioners are responsible for protecting livestock from TB and when necessary, may require testing, to establish or maintain the state's TB-free status."

"In their resolution adopted at the meeting, the TAHC commissioners directed dairy operators and purebred cattle owners to comply with testing requirements," Dr. Hillman pointed out. "However, the commissioners are optimistic that producers will participate voluntarily, to ensure the overall health and marketability of Texas cattle."

"All of Texas' 880 dairies and about 2,400 of Texas' purebred--or "seedstock"--beef cattle herds must be tested for cattle TB, as part of the effort to reclaim our TB-'free' designation from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)," explained Dr. Hillman. The testing effort is a major component of the five-pronged Texas TB plan, developed last year by a task force comprised of members from the dairy and beef industry and the TAHC. Other aspects of the plan include testing of breeding cattle exported from the state, enhanced inspection of carcasses at slaughter, required annual TB testing of rodeo stock imported from Mexico, and urging cattle producers to

voluntarily maintain imported Mexican feeder cattle a part from native cattle.

Dr. Hillman pointed out that Texas initially achieved TB-free status in 2000, with the exception of portions of El Paso and Hudspeth Counties, a small area which still remains under testing and movement restrictions. In 2002, Texas lost its coveted 'free' ranking after two infected herds were detected. The first was a purebred cattle herd in Fayette County. The second involved both dairy and beef cattle on a ranch headquartered in Pecos County. Another infected purebred cattle herd was detected in Zavala County in August 2003. The infected herds were destroyed, and another 14,000 head of cattle in nearby or potentially exposed herds were tested. No additional infection was detected.

"Now we must target classes of cattle where infection has been detected in the past. To detect any remaining infection, Texas' 880 dairies and at least a third of the state's purebred beef herds--about 2,400 herds--must be tested," he said. "More than 450 private veterinary practitioners have been certified to conduct the TB herd tests under contract with the TAHC, so dairy operators and participating ranchers will have no out-of-pocket expenses, other than rounding up and presenting their cattle for testing. The USDA is paying for this disease surveillance, but tests must be completed before September 2004, when the federal funding agreement will expire," said Dr. Hillman.

Adult cattle (24 months of age and older) are test-eligible, and owners may elect to have their younger, purchased heifers tested, also at no cost. A veterinarian conducts a TB test by injecting a small amount of tuberculin into the skin of the animal's caudal fold, under the tail. Seventy-two hours later, the veterinarian examines the injection site for any swelling, lumps or thickening of the skin, which indicates a positive response to the test. If the animal reacts to the test, additional testing will be conducted to rule out or confirm infection. "Since November 1, when the effort was 'kicked off,' 80 herds--49 dairies and 31 purebred beef herds--have been tested and are negative for TB infection. We still have a long way to go, so we urge dairy operators and ranchers to contact their private veterinary practitioner or the TAHC to schedule a herd test." Owners may call their area TAHC office, or the TAHC headquarters in Austin at 1-800-550-8242.

If TB infection is detected, Dr. Hillman said federal funds are available to buy the herd, so it can be destroyed, to prevent the spread of disease. "Now is the best time to find any remaining TB-infected herds in Texas," Dr. Hillman urged. "We must not regain our 'TB-free' status, only to lose it again later."

Beef Checkoff: Who collects and how much?

Six types of collecting points assisted in submitting \$1-per-head beef checkoff assessments to state beef councils and Cattlemen's Beef Board in fiscal 2003; total collections rose slightly for the year.

No one type of collecting points brings in the majority of collections, but the two largest collectors are auction markets and packers. In fiscal 2003, auction markets collected about 39.8 percent of the total through cattle sales to their operations.

According to the Cattlemen's Beef Board, the remaining assessments during fiscal 2003 were collected from U.S. Customs, for imports (10.44 percent); purebred/club calf sales (6.70 percent); individuals (6.07 percent); dealer order buyers (3.63 percent); and feedlots (1.45 percent). The percentage breakdowns are consistent with collection levels of previous years, the Beef Board reported.

The Beef Board oversees collection of \$1-per-head on all cattle sold in the United States have qualified state beef councils, the collecting points submit the assessments they collect through their operations to those beef councils. The state beef council then may retain up to 50 cents of the money collected in its state, but at least 50 cents must be sent to the Beef Board for investment in national checkoff programs approved by the Beef Promotion Operating Committee. Collecting points in five states that do not have state beef councils—Alaska, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island—submit the full \$1-per-head they collect directly to the Cattlemen's Beef Board.

Finally, U.S. Customs collects \$1 per head on imported live cattle and the equivalent on imported beef and beef products and submits those collections to the Beef Board.

In fiscal 2003, total assessments submitted to the Beef Board for national programs from all states and the other collecting points—reached \$45.9 million, up from about \$45.7 million in fiscal 2002. This does not include the 50 cents of each dollar that is kept by state beef councils for investment in regional and state programs or to supplement the national program, as directed by their boards. When state and national revenues are added together for fiscal 2003, they total about \$83.7 million.

Improved Cattle Profits May Increase Tax Liabilities

Producers should consult with their tax preparers early this year so they will have time to manage their taxable incomes. A couple of new twists to the to the depreciation and capital gains laws are available this year. The changes in the depreciation alternatives are significant. For many years, we have had an option (referred to as Sec. 179) to expense, initially up to \$10,000, of the purchase price of a capital asset such as a tractor, cow or cattle chute if it was for business use. For 2003, to expense the full amount, there will be no depreciation deduction in the following years. The IRS is not increasing the total amount of depreciation, they are just allowing us to recover the cost of a business asset much quicker. The new \$100,000 allowance is in effect for 2003, 2004 and 2005. Then the limit drops to \$25,000, unless there is further legislation. The other significant item is the income tax rate on long-term capital gains. The 2003 law reduces the rate from 10 percent to five percent for those in the 10 to 15 percent tax brackets and from 20 percent to 15 percent for taxpayers in higher income tax brackets. For information, see the complete article in the November issue of Ag News and Views published online at www.noble.org/Ag/news-views

--The Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, Inc

U.S. Animal Identification Plan

Comments on the draft U.S. Animal Identification Plan were being accepted through Dec. 31, 2003, from all interested individuals and groups. The plan defines the standards and framework for implementing a phased-in national food animal and livestock identification program. It was developed over the past year by 95 individuals representing several industry groups as well as state and federal animal health officials working collectively as the National Animal Identification Development team. Comments may be emailed to Communications@USAIP.info, faxed to (719) 538-8847 or mailed to USAIP Comments, 660 Southpointe Court, Suite 314, Colorado Springs, CO 80906. A copy of the plan is available at http://usaip.info/US_AIP_Plan_Draft_092903_Ver_4_0_Master_.pdf

Positive Outlook!

The market outlook is positive, says Randy Blach, executive vice president of Cattle-Fax. Robust beef demand combined with larger exports, small imports and a tightening domestic cattle supply provided an October market kick that left cattle producers shaking their heads in wonder. "It was probably an extreme," Blach told the audience during Texas Cattle Feeders Association's recent annual convention. "But we think fed cattle prices will average in the low to mid-\$80s for 2003 and range from the mid-\$90s to the mid \$70s for the year. And we'll continue to trade cattle at a high trading range in 2004 and likely into 2005." Blach said currentness has been the key. "Small carryover and declining carcass weights have been a huge driver in the market." That, coupled with surging demand, has given the fed cattle market an upward ride that is nothing short of astounding. "In each month in 2003, we've seen record beef demand," Blach reported. "That demand growth has been worth at least \$200 per head on the value of fed cattle."

Abolish Meat-Science Programs

Activists want to abolish meat-science programs in the nation's universities, says an industry expert who monitors the agendas and actions of animal rights groups. Kay Johnson, vice president of the Animal Agricultural Alliance, says a new group—Responsible Policies for Animals—has begun a letter-writing campaign in hopes of putting a major dent in funding for agricultural production education programs. The group was organized in March by former PETA executive David Canter. "What's different about this is that they are not just going to university department heads or deans," Johnson said the nation's top 25 animal rights organizations have spent \$200 million this year in media blitzes, lobbying efforts and information campaigns. She said the industry is made more vulnerable by the overall lack of knowledge by consumers of false animal rights claims. She urged producers to get their message out by participating in local civic groups.

Fowl Registration Program

Texas animal health commissioners on February 18 will consider for adoption proposed regulations that will require domestic and exotic fowl sellers, distributors and transporters to register, making it easier to locate birds in a disease outbreak. The commissioners will accept written public comments on the proposed regulations through January 18. House Bill 2328, passed during the 2003 Texas legislative session and signed into law, requires the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) to develop a registration program for fowl sellers, distributors and transporters who do not participate in recognized poultry or fowl disease surveillance programs.

"Many poultry diseases are highly contagious and when introduced into a flock, they spread quickly, threatening not only the state's commercial chicken and turkey industry, but also backyard flocks, caged pet birds and fowl raised for agricultural exhibitions," said Dr. Bob Hillman, Texas' state veterinarian and head of the TAHC, the state's livestock and poultry health regulatory agency. "Knowing who is selling and moving birds will allow us to access records, making it easier to track the movement of birds among flocks."

"In April 2003, Exotic Newcastle Disease (END), a deadly poultry virus foreign to the U.S., was confirmed in a small backyard flock near El Paso. State and federal quarantines were imposed on five counties in Texas and New Mexico, and for weeks, animal health teams combed neighborhoods, flea markets, roadside stands and feed stores to test birds, and provide information on disease, biosecurity and movement restrictions," he said. "More than 800 flocks were tested. If these flocks had been registered, the disease surveillance effort could have been conducted quickly and efficiently." Dr. Hillman said that, although no additional infection was detected in El Paso, the mere presence of END in Texas has cost the commercial poultry industry millions of dollars, due to trade restrictions imposed by nearly 30 countries. In California, the 2002-2003 END outbreak took an even greater toll when the virus jumped from backyard flocks to more than 20 commercial poultry operations. By year's end, more than 3 million birds in California had been destroyed at a cost of \$160 million to finally stamp out the viral outbreak, and thousands of hours were spent searching for at-risk flocks and tracking the movement of birds that had been sold or traded.

So, who does and doesn't need to register with the TAHC?

The proposed regulations exempt flocks enrolled in the National Poultry Improvement Plan's (NPPI) U.S. Pullorum-Typhoid Clean (PT) and U.S. Avian Influenza Clean (LPAI) programs. Or the flocks may be enrolled in Texas Poultry Federation's avian influenza monitoring program. "These flocks already have regular disease surveillance protocols," said Dr. Hillman. "Flock owners also may request an individual review for exemption, provided they participate in a program in which birds are routinely tested for pullorum-typhoid and avian influenza."

"Registration will be required for distributors, transporters and the dealers who sell at public sites, such as auctions, flea markets and other venues," said Dr. Hillman. "For the most part, we are targeting domestic fowl, such as chickens, turkeys, ducks and game fowl raised for food, eggs or agricultural exhibition. However, dealers,

distributors or transporters of exotic or pet birds (parakeets, parrots and a host of other caged birds) must register only if their birds are commingled or transported with domestic fowl, or are sold at the same public venue with domestic fowl. Exotic birds in commingled settings may be exposed to poultry diseases, or transport viruses or bacteria, even if they are not susceptible to infection. In a disease outbreak, it may be necessary to trace the movement and sale of these pet birds. At the sales, all fowl and birds must be confined to help reduce the chance for disease exposure."

Dr. Hillman stressed that the proposed registration program will not affect current TAHC regulations requiring that poultry offered for public sale or trade originate from flocks or hatcheries that are free of pullorum-typhoid, diseases caused by Salmonella bacteria. Sellers must furnish proof of their source of poultry or hatching eggs and be qualified by the Texas Pullorum-Typhoid Program as prescribed by the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL) and/or the National Poultry Improvement Plan. Poultry that are not properly identified and qualified as pullorum-typhoid clean are prohibited from sale and will be returned to the owner's or dealer's premises.

"A key component for disease tracking or surveillance is good record keeping," stressed Dr. Hillman. "Registrants will need to follow current and proposed TAHC regulations that require dealers to maintain and make available to the TAHC all records for two years on the sale, barter or exchange of domestic or exotic fowl." Information that must be collected includes the buyer's and seller's names and addresses, any movement or health status documents, transaction dates, and the number, breed, sex and description of the birds. Individual identification devices, such as wing or leg bands, will not be required.

"A biosecurity component also is included in the proposed regulations and stipulates that fowl be kept in clean and sanitary conditions. Furthermore, registrants are to notify the TAHC of reportable disease exposure or infections," commented Dr. Hillman.

Dr. Hillman said registration will involve completing an application annually with the TAHC and providing a list of the locations where domestic fowl, or domestic and exotic fowl are to be sold, distributed or transported. HB 2328 authorizes the TAHC to charge a fee for registration, and a sliding scale has been proposed, based on the seller's flock size. Fees range from \$25 for fewer than 100 fowl, to \$500 for more than 2,500 birds. Distributors or transporters will be charged an annual fee of \$500. The registration requirement and fees also will apply to out-of-state business operators who plan to transact business in Texas. Dr. Hillman said the TAHC commissioners will accept public comments on the proposed regulations through January 18. Comments should be emailed to comments@tahc.state.tx.us or mailed to TAHC Comments, Box 12966, Austin, TX 78711-2966.

"If these proposed regulations are adopted by the 12 TAHC commissioners at their February 18 meeting in Austin, we will work with bird and poultry associations, markets, dealers and fowl and bird producers to implement the regulations." noted Dr. Hillman. "TAHC staff at the TAHC offices or Austin headquarters also will be available to answer questions or provide registration applications." For more information, the TAHC Austin headquarters can be reached at 1-800-550-8242."

Academy for Ranch Management Workshops

The Department of Rangeland Ecology and Management is proud to announce The Academy for Ranch Management Workshops for 2004. The cost for each 3-day workshop (listed below) is \$395/person and includes meals and lodging. All workshops will be held at the Sonora Research Station.

Rangeland Restoration and Management	August 12-14
Rangeland Plant Identification	May 13-15
Restore and Manage Deer Habitat	July 8-10

Sign up now to reserve your space by calling Ray Hinnant at 979/845-5580. For more information, visit their website at: <http://rangeweb.tamu.edu/arm>.

Mailing List

To help defray costs, we are updating our mailing list. If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please contact Sheilah by phone (210/467-6575) or email at (sjwright@ag.tamu.edu). Be sure to indicate that you wish to be removed from the Beef Cattle Newsletter list.

The Bexar County Beef Cattle Newsletter

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March 2004

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