



November 15, 2007

The Honorable Chuck Conner  
Acting Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20250

**Transmitted via fax and regular mail**

Dear Secretary Conner:

Funding for the eradication of cattle fever ticks in Texas is desperately needed, and we request that you authorize the release of \$13 million from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) to address the current infestation in the temporary quarantine zones.

As you know, a permanent quarantine zone was established in South Texas in 1938 to serve as a buffer zone along the Mexican border. By 1943, fever ticks were eradicated from all of the states except a small area of southern Florida and in the Texas permanent quarantine zone. This permanent quarantine zone has been maintained by USDA and the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) since its creation. The zone has been an effective deterrent except for occasional incursions of fever ticks across the quarantine line.

However, the number of cattle fever tick infestations in the permanent quarantine zone and in the tick-free areas of Texas has increased to an alarming level in recent years. Within the last few months, the TAHC has imposed three separate "temporary preventive quarantine areas" in portions of Zapata and Starr counties and outside the permanent quarantine zone in portions of Maverick, Dimmit, and Webb counties in order to stop the spread of fever ticks. Reasons for the increase in fever tick incursions include increasing tick pressure from Mexico, treatment resistance, wildlife carriers, and insufficient resources.

The biggest challenge in fighting the fever tick problem is a chronic lack of funding for personnel and resources, which has resulted from years of under funding. In addition to support for the regular tick program congressional appropriation, an additional \$13 million from the CCC is needed to address the situation in the temporary preventive quarantine areas.

This funding is needed now and we urge you to support this request. Failure to control cattle fever tick outbreaks in the border area could impact the cattle industry far beyond Texas, resulting in billions of dollars of economic loss. The 2006 National Strategic Plan for the Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program describes the direct and indirect economic losses caused by cattle fever ticks. Support of this Plan would ensure continued control measures to prevent the spread of fever ticks. Thank you for your work on this matter and please let us know how we might be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Texas Cattle Feeders Association  
Texas Farm Bureau  
Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association

cc: Dr. John Clifford  
Mr. Barry Jackson