



TAD News

May 2009

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Next TAD Board Meeting:
1 p.m., June 25
Grapevine, Texas

Dairymen speak up about national ID program

U.S. Department of Agriculture staff heard and earful from Texas livestock producers – including TAD – at a recent listening session in Austin on the National Animal Identification System (NAIS).

About 185 people attended the session, including two TAD Board members and staff, who submitted oral comments. The Austin meeting was the third of seven meetings scheduled around the United States to seek comments on NAIS.

Most of those in attendance who spoke said they are adamantly opposed to NAIS or any other government involvement deemed to be an invasion of citizens' private property rights. While other livestock organizations and associations were supportive of the concern for traceability in the event of a disease outbreak, they opposed a mandatory program and emphasized that data created from a tracking system should be held in private databases rather than by the government.

The concept of a national program to trace diseased animals was clearly demonstrated in Texas a couple of years ago during a biosecurity mock exercise that TAD participated in with other livestock organizations, Texas Animal Health Commission, USDA/APHIS and the Department of Homeland Security. During the exercise, it was clear that a foreign animal disease outbreak in the southwest would be devastating to livestock agriculture. Not only would domestic market access be affected, but so would access to off-shore markets. That was seen several years ago with the BSE scare and more recently with the impact of the H1N1 "swine flu" on the pork industry.

Hence, the concern; in the case of a farm with a confirmed disease case, existing mitigating protocols would essentially shut down movement and livestock and correlated commerce until USDA/APHIS or the agency of jurisdiction could get control over the affected zone surrounding the identified farm to locate, evaluate and finally control the problem so that orderly commerce could resume.

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Manager's Update

John Cowan

Capitol Report

Legislative session nearing the end, fate of many bills still uncertain

By Shayne Woodard

June 1 and the end of the 2009 legislative session are rapidly approaching, and bills began falling victim to the ticking clock on May 14, the deadline for the Texas House to pass a House bill (bills with HB in their name). Members whose bills died began to try to tack on their desired legislation to other bills that might become law.

From then on, the fate of hundreds of bills will be determined more by the calendar than debate, as other deadlines are reached.

As of May 20, of the 7,941 bills and resolutions filed this session, only 363 have passed both chambers and been sent to the governor. The governor has until June 21 to sign, veto or let a bill become law without his signature, meaning the fate of legislation technically hangs in the balance even after the

Legislature adjourns.

Among legislation of interest to TAD:

- The Texas House narrowly (73-71) approved HB 1657, the workers' compensation bill. The bill overturns the controversial Supreme Court case *Entergy v. Summers* that shielded premises owners against lawsuits by contract workers covered by workers' compensation. The bill is strongly opposed by many business groups, including Texans for Lawsuit Reform. An amendment to the bill exempts homeowners and businesses that employ less than 100 people from the changes made by the bill. The amendment also specifically exempts a small business engaged in agriculture. HB 1657 still must be considered by the Senate.

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The debate obviously will continue in the remaining listening sessions. Meanwhile, you are advised to keep your biosecurity plan up-to-date. This may be your best line of defense against disease. ▪

“Capitol,” continued from page 1

- SB 876 by Sen. Kip Averitt (R-Waco) – relating to the performance of annual soil tests for certain concentrated animal feeding operations by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality – has passed the Senate. It was posted on the May 22 local calendar of the Texas House, where it is expected to pass without debate. The bill then will go to the governor.

- It appears that bills targeting illegal immigration will not pass this session. Many of the immigration bills never moved out of a House committee.

Bills sent to the governor include:

- SB 1163 by Sen. Kel Siliger (R-Amarillo), relating to penalties for animal theft.

- HB 1918 by Rep. Drew Darby (R-San Angelo), relating to changing the Office of Rural Community Affairs to the Texas Department of Rural Affairs.

- HB 4006 by Rep. Rick Hardcastle, relating to veterinarian reports of diseased animals that must be made to the Texas Animal Health Commission. ▪

TAD Board Action

The Texas Association of Dairymen Board of Directors took the following action during its April meeting in Austin:

- Heard a report on the Bovine TB found on a dairy near San Angelo.
- Approved up to \$500 for Texas AgriLife Extension County Agent Dairy Award.
- Approved a \$2,500 student scholarship for the Southern Great Plains Dairy Consortium teaching program.

TAD’s next Board meeting will be June 25 in Grapevine.

Dairymen celebrate Southwest Dairy Field Day

By Darren Turley

TAD Assistant Manager

Southwest Dairy Field Day came back this year in a big way. Dairymen from across the state came out in force May 8 in Dublin to see the Sierra Dairy facility of Alan VanderHorst.

There was plenty to see, with tours of his various dairies and all their advancements. Highlights included the cross ventilation barn and the weeping wall manure system. VanderHorst has an extensive crossbreeding program, and everyone enjoyed seeing them ride on the 60-cow rotary parlor. A huge tent held the 60 vendor and industry booths from across the country.

The TAD booth was visited by lots of dairymen and industry leaders throughout the day. The dairymen were very interested in the legislative issues being monitored by TAD. Speculation about the CWT program and the future trends of dairy pricing were on everyone’s mind.

Texas Agrilife Extension Service worked hard to bring back this event. It was a big success, and we look forward to next year. ▪

Senate confirms TCEQ commissioner

The Texas Senate has confirmed the appointment of Bryan Shaw, Ph.D., of Bryan to serve as a commissioner of the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

Shaw is an associate professor in the Biological and Agricultural Engineering Department of Texas A&M University. Many of his courses focused on air pollution engineering. Shaw is a member of several committees for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Science Advisory Board and is a member of the U.S. Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Air Quality Task Force.

His term will expire August 31, 2013. ▪

Grazing conference set

The 2009 Dairy Grazing Conference will be in Joplin, Mo., July 8-10. The theme of the conference is “Managing the System.” The conference is sponsored by Missouri Extension and the College of Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources. For more information, visit

<http://agebb.missouri.edu/dairy/grazing/conference/index.htm>.



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