USDA

United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

The Honorable Todd Staples
Commissioner
Texas Department of Agriculture
Post Office Box 12847
Austin, Texas 78711

JAN 12 2009

Dear Commissioner Staples:

Thank you for your letter of November 14, 2008, regarding the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Cattle Fever Tick Eradication Program (CFTEP).

I recognize the importance of cattle fever tick (CFT) prevention and eradication to Texas ranchers, especially given the increase in recent years of tick-infested premises in your State. I also appreciate your strong support for the CFTEP's surveillance, control, and eradication activities in Texas. As you know, USDA believes that the CFTEP is critical in preventing the incursion of ticks from Mexico.

To help control CFT outbreaks occurring outside the permanent quarantine zone in Texas, USDA transferred $5.232 million from the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) in March 2008 and released $383,312 from USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Contingency Fund in July 2008. These funds better enabled APHIS and your department to detect and contain new infestations as quickly as possible, and they were in addition to fiscal year (FY) 2008 CFTEP appropriations in the amount of $7.599 million that were used for activities within the permanent quarantine zone. For FY 2009, APHIS has requested $9.907 million—an increase of $2.308 million over FY 2008—in appropriated funds to expand CFTEP's day-to-day operations within the permanent quarantine zone. Under the FY 2008 Continuing Resolution, $3.268 million is available for CFT through March 6, 2009.

An additional $4.9 million in emergency CCC funding is being transferred to APHIS to support the CFTEP updated emergency response plan. USDA will continue to work closely with State, industry and international cooperators using these and other resources to carry out this plan. Most recently, during a productive June 2008 binational animal health meeting in Chihuahua City, Mexico, USDA, border-State veterinarians, and U.S. cattle industry representatives met with their government and industry counterparts in Mexico to address strategies for reducing the incidence of CFT.

Thank you again for your letter. I assure you that USDA remains committed to addressing CFT and other agricultural issues of importance to Texas.

Sincerely,

Edward T. Schafer
Secretary

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