



NEWS RELEASE

Texas Animal Health Commission
"Serving Texas Animal Agriculture Since 1893"
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 20, 2013

Texas Animal Health Commission Continues Testing Equine in Kleberg County for Piroplasmiasis

AUSTIN – The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) designated Kleberg County (South Texas) equine (horses, donkeys, ponies, mules, and zebras) as high risk for exposure to Equine Piroplasmiasis (Piro) in March of 2013. As a result, the TAHC began mandatory testing of all equine in Kleberg County on April 8. The initial Kleberg County test zones extended south from Escondido Creek to the Kleberg-Kenedy county line.

Equine Piroplasmiasis (Piro) is a blood-borne protozoal disease that affects all equine, but is not transmissible to humans. Through research, a treatment protocol has been developed that can often clear the infection and lead to the release of horses that tested positive. Piro is currently not considered endemic in Texas or the U.S.; however, isolated outbreaks of the disease such as in Kleberg County have occurred.

Piro can be transmitted from a positive horse to a negative horse by blood transfer from dirty instruments or by tick vectors. South Texas has a large and diverse population of ticks. Horses visiting pastures with infected tick populations can become infected as a result. Once positive horses are treated or removed, the tick populations within those pastures free themselves of the disease in approximately one year, and it will be safe to put negative horses back in the pasture.

"Because Piro is considered a foreign animal disease to the U.S., it is important we make every effort to find undetected cases in the area," said Dr. Dee Ellis, Texas' State Veterinarian. "We believe the Piro situation related to tick transmission in Texas is limited to just a few south Texas counties. The TAHC is asking for the support of local horse owners to ensure this testing effort is a success." Horse owners are also encouraged to discuss the situation with their local veterinarian.

To date, 283 premises and a total of 747 equine animals have been tested in Kleberg County as part of the county wide testing effort. Of the premises and animals tested, 6 premises have tested positive with a total of 19 total horses involved.

The TAHC is hoping to wrap up testing in the southern part of the county by the end of May, where approximately 30 premises remain to be tested. The next efforts will involve testing the northern part of Kleberg County. All equine owners in the county who have not had their equine tested are strongly encouraged to contact the TAHC as soon as possible to schedule an appointment. Equine owners can call (361) 676-0979 to set up an appointment. The test is **free** of charge.

“We greatly appreciate the cooperation of the equine owners and veterinary practitioners of Kleberg County, and the high level of voluntary compliance with the mandatory testing requirement,” said Dr. T.R. Lansford, Region 5 Director. “We look forward to working with the remaining owners of untested equine and the local veterinarians as we strive to complete the area test in Kleberg County. It is important that all equine are tested as soon as possible.”

Kleberg County equine owners and/or veterinary practitioners who have questions should contact the TAHC Region 5 Office in Beeville at (361) 676-0979. For more information on Piroplasmiasis they can also visit www.tahc.state.tx.us/animal_health/equine/piro.html.

The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) strives to keep Texas' livestock disease free, ultimately allowing for better marketability and commerce.

Founded in 1893, the Texas Animal Health Commission works to protect the health of all Texas livestock, including: cattle, swine, poultry, sheep, goats, equine animals, and exotic livestock.

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