

October 2016  
Volume 78 No. 5

# TEXAS

---

# VETERINARIAN

---

A PUBLICATION OF THE TEXAS VETERINARY MEDICAL ASSOCIATION



**STRENGTH IN TEAM**



## REPORTABLE DISEASES

**H**ave you ever called the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) to report what you thought was a reportable disease? If so, you may have questions about the time it takes to get follow-up test results back. You also may wonder about the time it takes to see information released about positive confirmatory results on a reportable disease. To understand the answers to the questions above, let's start at the beginning.

Licensed veterinarians in the state of Texas have a duty to report the existence of reportable diseases. For practitioners who work on livestock, exotic livestock, domestic fowl or exotic fowl, the existence of a reportable disease must be reported to the TAHC within 24 hours of diagnosis.

By Susan Culp, DVM  
Lead Veterinarian for Authorized Personnel Programs, Texas Animal Health Commission

national disease control or eradication program diseases or TAHC-designated diseases, the initial positive test result must often be repeated by a regulatory veterinarian. This retesting process requires that a state or federal veterinarian call to schedule a visit at the affected premise to retest the animal(s) and submit the follow-up test(s) to a National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) laboratory. Upon confirmation of a positive test result, the state or federal regulatory veterinarian will contact the reporting veterinarian to discuss any regulatory action (premise biosecurity, cleaning and disinfection, movement restriction, permit-

ting, follow-up herd testing, etc.) that must be performed pursuant to a positive confirmation of a reportable disease. This entire process from the time of reporting to TAHC until the reporting veterinarian can go back to their livestock owner to discuss the positive confirmatory test may take up to 14 days.

With respect to diseases that are OIE-notifiable diseases or FADs, the reporting veterinarian may or may not have taken samples for testing upon examination of the animal. If not and the suspected disease or condition was reported directly, the state or federal regulatory veterinarian starts by contacting the premise/animal owner to test the animal(s). Depending on the suspected disease, samples may be sent to TVMDL or directly to the National Veterinary Ser-

vices Laboratory in Ames, Iowa, or Plum Island, New York. With certain diseases or conditions, presumptive test results can be obtained, allowing for discussion between the regulatory veterinarian and the reporting veterinarian regarding any regulatory action that must be taken while awaiting the confirmatory test results. This entire process, from the time of reporting to TAHC until the confirmatory test results can be communicated back to the reporting veterinarian, also may take up to 14 days.

While waiting for confirmatory test results, significant communication between the regulatory veterinarian and their staff with the reporting veterinarian and the animal owner often occurs. Communication at this early phase is often limited to those parties because the confirmatory laboratory testing has not yet been reported. Releasing information too soon (prior to confirmatory test results being reported) can be detrimental to all parties involved should the confirmatory test return conflicting results.

This is not to imply that for reportable diseases of significance that TAHC does not immediately work on messaging to stakeholders. Messaging is concurrently developed, but that messaging would only be released after a positive confirmatory test result is relayed to the reporting veterinarian and after the reporting veterinarian has been given time to relay that information to the animal owner.

Balancing accurate and timely communication with reporting veterinarians, animal owners and stakeholders is paramount in our day-to-day job of protecting the animal industry from and/or mitigating the effects of domestic, foreign and emerging diseases.

For more information on diseases and conditions reportable to TAHC, visit [http://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal\\_health/reportable.html](http://www.tahc.texas.gov/animal_health/reportable.html). **TV**



Andy Schwartz, DVM  
Executive Director,  
Texas Animal Health  
Commission



This listing of diseases and conditions that are reportable to TAHC include diseases and conditions that are notifiable to the Office International Des Epizooties (OIE), foreign animal diseases (FADs), national disease control, eradication program diseases or TAHC-designated diseases. Certain zoonotic diseases are also reportable to the Texas Department of State Health Services.

With respect to diseases that are