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## **Technical and Financial Assistance to Fight Cattle Fever Tick Available Through USDA-NRCS**

The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is providing technical and financial assistance to ranchers in a 17-county area to help fight the spread of the cattle fever tick. The conservation assistance will be available through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) for the Rio Grande Domestic Animal Stress/Mortality Statewide Resource Concern, since the cattle fever ticks can carry and transmit a tiny blood parasite called, '*babesia*,' that can be deadly to cattle.

The 17 counties included are Brooks, Cameron, Dimmit, Duval, Frio, Hidalgo, Jim Hogg, Jim Wells, La Salle, Kinney, Maverick, Starr, Val Verde, Webb, Willacy, Zapata, and Zavala.

Livestock producers can voluntarily work with their local NRCS and soil and water conservation district (SWCD) to develop a conservation plan with land management practices that help them meet their land management goals and objectives. The producers will also receive technical assistance to implement the conservation plan and in installing land management practices to fight the spread of cattle fever tick.

Conservation and land management practices that are eligible for financial assistance in the cattle fever tick initiative are cross fencing, trough and livestock pipe, pond, well, brush management, range planting, prescribed burning, prescribed grazing, and wildlife upland habitat management. The installation and implementation of these practices will serve to facilitate livestock handling, prescribed grazing, alter or destroy the cattle fever tick habitat, and also help manage the wildlife, which are potential carriers/hosts of the fever tick.

“We know that in working together with the landowners and other partners to fight the cattle fever ticks, we will be that much closer to eradication,” said Don Gohmert, Texas state conservationist with NRCS. “By utilizing the delivery system already on the ground, NRCS and the SWCDs can work with landowners to develop and implement conservation plans that address the whole property in order to protect their natural resources while disrupting the life cycle of the cattle fever tick.”

Conservation plans will provide landowners the management tools he or she can follow to meet their natural resource management objectives and goals, and provide the mechanism for the management of cattle and wildlife.

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Gohmert reminded agricultural producers that a conservation plan is not a contract. Only when the landowner receives financial assistance on practices identified in the plan, will he/she have contracts drawn up for those specific practices. The assistance and services provided through NRCS and the SWCDs are provided without a fee and are available to all agricultural producers.

NRCS is working in partnership with the SWCDs, Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Councils, Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board (TSSWCB), Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC), and the USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) on this fever tick initiative.

Interested livestock producers should visit their nearest NRCS office for more information about technical and financial assistance available to help them fight the cattle fever tick through conservation planning and implementing land management practices.

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