

# Texas Animal Health Commission Workforce Plan

## I. Agency Overview

The Texas cattle fever tick played a pivotal role in the 1893 creation of the Livestock Sanitary Commission, which was renamed the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) in 1959. Since that time, TAHC and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) have worked cooperatively with livestock producers on animal health issues in furtherance of the agency's vision, mission, and philosophy.

Thirteen Commissioners appointed by the Governor, representing all segments of the livestock industry and the public, oversee and guide the agency's activities. The Governor designates the Chair. The Commissioners appoint an Executive Director who supervises the agency's activities. The TAHC operating budget is prepared and approved by the Commissioners on an annual basis, whereas the TAHC has specific statutory authority and responsibility to control and eradicate any disease or agent of transmission that threatens the livestock and poultry of Texas, as outlined in Chapters 161 through 168 of the Texas Agriculture Code, Vernon's Annotated Texas Statutes. The agency is vested with the responsibility of protecting all livestock, domestic animals and domestic fowl, from diseases stated in the statutes, or recognized as maladies by the veterinary profession. TAHC is authorized to act to eradicate or control any disease or agent of transmission for any disease that affects livestock, exotic livestock, domestic animals, domestic fowl, and exotic fowl, regardless of whether or not the disease is communicable. In order to perform these duties and responsibilities, except for rabies vaccine, TAHC is authorized to control the sale and distribution of veterinary biologics; regulate the entry of livestock, domestic animals, and domestic fowl into the state; and control the movement of livestock.

An increased awareness of the threat of agro terrorism attack, as well as the impact of natural disasters on animals, has expanded the agency's role in emergency management and Homeland Security activities. The Governor added TAHC to the State Emergency Management Council in 2001 and to the Homeland Security Council in 2005. Because of TAHC's expertise in animal health, the Division Chief of the Texas Division of Emergency Management designated TAHC as the state's lead agency for all animal issues involving emergencies, including natural and man-made disasters and acts of agro terrorism, as well as naturally occurring animal disease outbreaks. TAHC also participates on the Homeland Security Council and the Emergency Management Steering Committee, a joint effort between TAHC and USDA to prepare for and respond to foreign animal disease outbreaks and other disasters.

As Texas hones its competitiveness in the global food market, TAHC programs support animal agriculture, focusing on the control and eradication of domestic diseases and ensuring the basic infrastructure to reduce the risk of newly emerging diseases, foreign animal diseases and exotic pests. Efficient and effective surveillance is supported by a modern and competent laboratory system. Veterinarians and Veterinary Epidemiologists oversee the diagnosis of diseases, and assure appropriate tracing of the movement of exposed or infected animals, to determine the origin of infection and minimize the transmission of disease.

At the height of the cattle brucellosis eradication campaign, more than 350 employees worked for the TAHC, most of whom were livestock inspectors testing cattle for brucellosis. In the past decade, the TAHC has dropped its full-time equivalent workforce by almost 50%, while maintaining a basic infrastructure of cross-trained staff capable of handling a variety of diseases and species of animals.

The TAHC workforce is comprised of field inspectors, veterinarians, veterinary epidemiologists, laboratory personnel, field investigators, and administrative staff.

The TAHC is funded by a combination of state general revenue funds, federal cooperative funds (USDA) and fee based revenue. For the 2016 – 2017 Biennium, the TAHC authorized workforce is 183.2 for 2016 full-time equivalent employees (FTEs) and 184.2 FTEs for 2017. As in the past, riders in the General Appropriations Act provide contingency authority for TAHC to add additional FTEs when federal funds are allocated for salary costs; none of these contingent FTEs count against the agency FTE cap.

Despite the reduction in agency staffing and funding over the past decade, TAHC's role in animal agriculture in Texas continues to expand and become more complex, particularly in light of emerging diseases and its growing role related to emergency management. Within the constraints of our current human and financial resources, TAHC is required to prioritize its animal disease control and eradication programs, emergency management, preparation and response events, and emerging disease roles and regulations to maximize our resources to the greatest extent possible. Continued fever tick infestations, border violence issues and emerging diseases require the agency to closely allocate resources to be able to fight new battles as they arise.

#### **A. Agency Vision, Mission, Philosophy**

- **Vision:** Through the cooperative efforts of the TAHC, animal producers, and allied industry groups, the animal population of Texas is healthy and secure.
- **Mission:** The mission of the TAHC is:
  - to protect the animal industry from and/or mitigate the effects of domestic, foreign and emerging diseases;
  - to increase the marketability of Texas livestock commodities at the state, national and international level;
  - to promote and ensure animal health and productivity;
  - to protect human health from animal diseases and conditions that are transmissible to people; and
  - to prepare for and respond to emergency situations involving animals by conducting agency business in a responsive, cooperative and transparent manner.
- **Philosophy:** The TAHC will carry out its mission with honesty, openness and efficiency. We will use the best available resources, technology and trained personnel to achieve the agency goals. We will listen to and respect the opinions and concerns of the people of Texas. We will encourage and promote open communication between all parties. We will strive to continuously develop new, or enhance existing relationships among government, industry, and private citizens to realize our vision of a healthy and secure animal population in Texas.

#### **B. Strategic Goal, Objective, and Strategies**

- **Goal:** To protect and enhance the health of Texas animal populations, facilitating productivity and marketability while sustaining reduced human health risks.
- **Objective:** To minimize the impact of disease on Texas animal populations by maintaining or reducing known levels of diseases; and, to enhance preparedness for emergency response by increasing the staff activities devoted to emergency preparedness.

- **Strategies:**
  - **Strategy A.1.1 Field Operations:**  
Monitor, control and/or eradicate diseases and infestations through statewide field based animal health management and assurance programs.
  - **Strategy A.1.2 Diagnostic/Epi support**  
Provide epidemiological expertise, serological testing, microbiological confirmation, and parasite identification services for diseases and parasites of regulatory importance to the animal agriculture industries in Texas.
  - **Strategy A.1.3 Promote Compliance:**  
Promote voluntary compliance with legal requirements by providing education/information, and resolve violations through effective use of legal enforcement and compliance activities.
  - **Strategy A.1.4 Animal Emergency Management:**  
Provide preparedness and response activities to serve and protect animals and animal agriculture, through training and planning assistance for local jurisdictions regarding animal related issues during hazards and disasters, in addition to responding to, mitigating the effects of, and helping local jurisdictions recover from threats to animals and animal agriculture such as foreign and emerging animal diseases, natural disasters, or acts of terrorism.

### **C. Impact of Growing Animal Health Programs on TAHC Strategies**

New animal health management programs, existing animal health programs, and increased regulatory requirements, at both the federal and state levels, are expected to impact agency workload priorities and workforce structure over the next five years. TAHC must manage limited state and federal resources appropriated to the agency for a growing list of animal health diseases, programs, projects, and initiatives, which will drastically impact the TAHC's resource and workforce needs.

## **II. Current Workforce Profile (Supply Analysis)**

### **A. Critical Workforce Skills/Functions**

To fulfill the mission of the TAHC, employees must have a variety of necessary skills and job functions. These include:

- Veterinary medical knowledge, both large and small animal
- Knowledge of Epidemiologic principles
- Animal emergency response planning staff
- Microbiologists and laboratory tech staff
- Safe and effective evaluation and handling of livestock
- Personnel with GIS knowledge/GIS mapping skills
- Accounting personnel with expertise in budgeting, control, and collection and documentation of fees
- Information Technology professionals with software development, database administration, systems analysis, webmaster duties, business analysis, network engineering, technical writing, and hardware and software maintenance skills
- Customer service skills for support staff and field staff
- Human Resource Staff knowledgeable and experienced in employment law, compensation and benefits, policy writing, and employee relations

- General computer knowledge and data entry skills
- Grant writing skills
- Project management skills
- Managerial knowledge and skills
- Public Speaking and presentation skills
- Staff knowledgeable in safety guidelines
- Research and resource tracking knowledge and skills
- Comprehensive video and editing skills

## B. Workforce Demographics

In FY 2014, TAHC’s workforce was comprised of 59.7% males and 40.3% females. 71.5% of employees were 40 years of age or older and 40.8% of employees had at least 10 years of service with the agency.

The following table compares the percentage of African American, Hispanic American, and Female TAHC employees for fiscal year 2014. By expanding its targeted recruitment resources, the TAHC has been working, and will continue to work, to address the under-representation of African American, Hispanic American, and female employees.

	<u>African American TAHC %</u>	<u>African American State%</u>
Officials/Administration	0.0%	7.1%
Professional	3.4%	11.0%
Technical	20.0%	13.7%
Administrative Supportive	3.3%	13.6%
Para-Professional	3.1%	12.7%

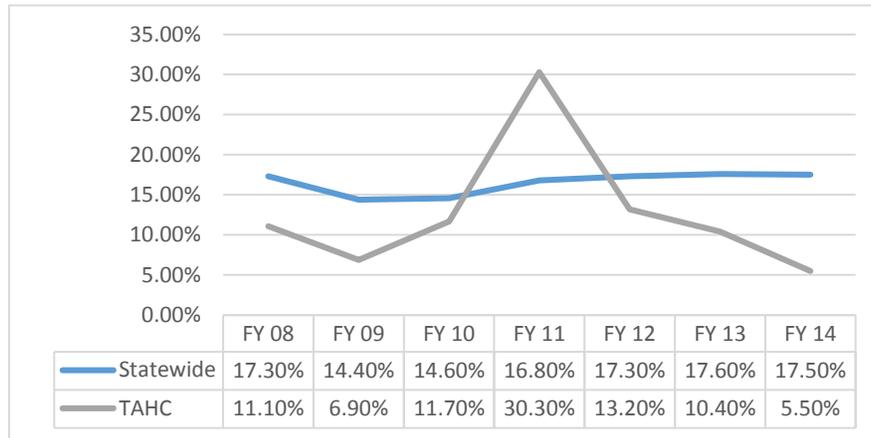
	<u>Hispanic American TAHC %</u>	<u>Hispanic American State%</u>
Officials/Administration	5.3%	20.9%
Professional	13.8%	18.6%
Technical	6.7%	28.8%
Administrative Supportive	16.7%	33.0%
Para-Professional	12.3%	51.2%

	<u>Female American TAHC %</u>	<u>Female American State%</u>
Officials/Administration	26.3%	37.5%
Professional	51.7%	54.9%
Technical	26.7%	51.3%
Administrative Supportive	90.0%	72.8%
Para-Professional	23.1%	48.5%

### C. Employee Turnover

Based on turnover statistics published by the State Auditor’s Office for voluntary separations, involuntary separations, and retirements by agency employees, including interagency transfers, the TAHC has historically enjoyed a lower-than-average turnover rate, except during the 2012/2013 biennium when layoffs were required due to budgetary constraints. The TAHC employee turnover rate for FY 2014 was 5.5% as illustrated in the graph below. This turnover rate is lower than a typical year for the TAHC.

**Turnover Rate Comparison: TAHC Versus Statewide**



For the most part, the 5.5% turnover rate for FY 2014 was due to resignations and retirements. There were no inter-agency transfers, one termination, and two reductions in force.

### D. Retirement Eligibility

The TAHC continues to face the challenge of losing many long-tenured staff to retirement, and this trend is expected to continue through the next 10 years. With an aging workforce and a projection of more than 35% of its authorized FTEs eligible to retire over that period of time, the agency must plan strategies for filling these vacancies with knowledgeable and skilled personnel.

## III. Future Workforce Profile (Demand Analysis)

The United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA-APHIS), is placing increased regulatory demands on Texas while simultaneously decreasing support. In addition, the livestock industry in Texas is setting high expectations for the TAHC to initiate stepped-up disease surveillance, maintain regulatory enforcement on all disease programs, and increase involvement in marketability issues. As a result, our inspectors and veterinarians will become even more important to the economic viability of the livestock and poultry industries in Texas. It is critical for the TAHC to be able to recruit, hire and retain highly-skilled personnel to occupy these positions.

The TAHC must continue to address the issues of competitive salaries and career ladders in order to recruit and retain inspectors and veterinarians who perform the key functions of the agency. During the current biennium, the inspector salaries were addressed, but the American Veterinary Medical Association's salary survey still shows that TAHC's veterinary salaries below market. The ability to recruit for these positions has been difficult, especially in the south Texas area. To prevent the loss of critical skills, it is crucial for the agency to continue to monitor and keep up with market salary trends.

Succession plans for retaining critical knowledge, skills, and abilities as long-tenured staff retire is also a major issue for the agency, and one that is difficult to administer with limited position redundancies and a small staff. The agency will continue to provide on-the-job training and encourage outside training to staff in an effort to ready them for positions vacated by tenured staff who retire.

#### **A. Critical Functions**

- The TAHC needs to be able to attract and retain veterinarians trained in epidemiology and large animals, a specialty area where a nation-wide shortage exists. Large animal veterinarians are becoming scarce as more graduating vet students are opting to go into companion animal practice. In order to attract and retain large animal veterinarians and epidemiologists, the agency must pay at or above similar jobs in Texas state government, other states, USDA-APHIS, and comparable private entities.
- The emphasis of TAHC's livestock inspectors, veterinarians, and epidemiologists is shifting from a program geared toward cattle brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication to one that encompasses a variety of species (cattle, hogs, sheep and goats, horses, chickens and poultry, deer, and exotic livestock and poultry) and their corresponding diseases and conditions.
- Career ladders must be reviewed, updated and implemented for all staff in the agency, as per our governing legislation. This includes not only livestock inspectors and veterinarians, but also staff who perform the agency's administrative and laboratory functions.
- It is imperative that the agency keeps up-to-date with technological changes for animal disease tracking. Therefore, the agency must be able to recruit, hire, and retain staff who have the knowledge and expertise to understand, trouble-shoot, and update these technologies such as GIS/GPS programs, cloud services, and mobile solutions.
- Expert managerial skills and abilities are needed to continue strong leadership within the agency and to oversee and coordinate complex programs.
- Agency microbiologists and technicians must be equipped with state-of-the-art laboratory equipment and be trained in new and emerging tests and technologies in order for the agency to fulfill its mission of animal disease, detection, surveillance and eradication. Laboratory staff must receive pay that is comparable with the labor market.
- To be able to capitalize on funding that is available from various sources, including the federal government, the agency should have skilled grant writers to assist in securing needed funding.
- Each biennium the agency is asked to provide additional services and to handle new projects, many times without additional funding or funding sources. To ensure that these projects are accomplished with maximum efficiency, the agency needs to train or employ staff with project management skills and expertise.
- The need for animal emergency management planners to help the local jurisdictions develop sound animal emergency response plans will continue and grow in the future.

- All TAHC staff must be trained and ready to undertake new roles and responsibilities when animal emergencies arise. To do so, staff must be adequately trained in utilizing the federal government's incident command structure and be able to activate the structure to prevent or minimize loss of life or damage to property and/or natural resources as a result of either human or natural-phenomena caused events.
- It is important for the agency to have veterinarians skilled in small animal care to assist when animal emergencies arise.

## **B. Expected Workforce Changes**

- A smaller ratio of veterinary and epidemiology staff-to-livestock inspectors is desirable to adequately manage domestic and foreign animal disease. With the growing list of animal species and disease types with which all staff must be knowledgeable, the veterinary and epidemiology roles will dramatically increase.
- Livestock inspectors' and veterinarians' duties are evolving in another way also. Technological changes are occurring rapidly, with increased technological usage of Global Positioning Systems (GPS), Global Information Systems (GIS), laptop computers, and automated animal identification collection technologies (ex RFID tags) etc. While these technological changes should aid field staff in the efficient and effective performance of duties, these are new skill sets that have been added to their jobs. It is expected that technological changes will continually alter their duties and responsibilities in the future.
- Field staff must be able to effectively communicate with market owners and livestock producers, and to educate them on agency rules and state/federal laws pertaining to sale, movement, quarantine and disposal of livestock, poultry and exotic animals. This new skill set has become increasingly important during the last several years and will continue to be in the future.
- Staff skilled in effective grant-writing is desirable to ensure the agency is awarded funding from federal sources to perform the duties and responsibilities required of staff.
- Fee collection and distribution is a new concept for the TAHC, but it is anticipated that agency revenue will continue to be dependent on fee collection in some capacity. In order to manage fees effectively, the agency needs to hire and retain staff that are knowledgeable in fee collection protocols.
- Retirements of long-tenured staff with vast institutional knowledge of the workings of the agency and the livestock/poultry industry in Texas will leave the agency with knowledge gaps in its workforce that must be filled. The agency plans to bridge this gap through on-the-job training, and pertinent outside training of staff.
- Conversion to electronic documents will increase the need for enhanced data management systems. This, in turn, will require training and recruitment of staff knowledgeable in these data management systems.

## **C. Anticipated Increases in Number of Employees Needed**

- Additional FTEs will be needed to adequately perform the agency's emergency management duties and responsibilities.
- Additional information technology staff will be needed to develop an agency-wide animal management system, plan, implement, trouble-shoot, and train staff to utilize

new and evolving technologies, including cloud services, mobility solutions, and document management systems.

- Due to new and emerging animal diseases and the livestock/poultry growth rate in Texas, the increased responsibilities of the field inspectors, veterinarians, and epidemiologists could increase the number of staff needed.
- Because of the continued complexities involved in recognizing, categorizing and effectively planning for eradication efforts of new and emerging animal disease, more veterinary and epidemiological staff will be required to face future demands.
- The continued effort to fight fever ticks in south Texas and other disease issues along the Rio Grande continue to stretch agency human and financial resources.

#### **D. Future Workforce Skills Needed**

- Risk analysis and risk management skills for Epidemiologists.
- GIS development and GPS skills.
- Expertise in new and emerging diseases and foreign animal diseases.
- Safe and effective techniques for tissue and blood sample collection.
- Use of state-of-the-art laboratory equipment and diagnostic techniques.
- Use and maintenance of personal protective equipment to safeguard against highly infectious emerging diseases and agents used for treatment.
- Development and delivery of public information presentations.
- Accounting skills in handling and distribution of fees collected.
- Collaboration, negotiation, and public relations skills.
- Project management skills.
- Strategic planning and business plan development and implementation skills.
- Supervisory and general management skills.
- Information technology skills to include cloud services and mobility solutions.
- Veterinarians who are skilled in foreign animal disease identification and control.
- Veterinarians who are skilled in dealing with small animal issues.
- Emergency management planners (local and state level).
- Knowledge and training in logistics.
- Knowledge and experience in records retention.
- Knowledge and experience in secure commodities.
- Knowledge and experience in safety and health rules, regulations, and standards

## **IV. Gap Analysis**

### **A. Anticipated Shortage of Workers**

The agency's current FTE count may not be sufficient to address the increasing workload and expanding functions. Veterinarians, epidemiologists and livestock inspectors may be needed in greater numbers as the Texas Animal Health Commission's role in dealing with new and emerging animal diseases evolves. The agency's involvement in emergency response for the state of Texas continues to grow beyond the current FTE allocations in that area. Laboratory staff and administrative support staff will need to be hired in sufficient numbers to meet regulatory and statutory requirements.

Border issues in south Texas along the Rio Grande River have stretched agency human capital to its limit. With no end in sight, the agency will continue to evaluate personnel needs in this area.

The past biennium left the agency with gaps in its veterinary staff. Positions have been posted with little to no response. This trend, especially in south Texas, is expected to continue.

Our ability to recruit and retain the needed staff will continue to be limited by the agency's state and federal funding.

## **B. Critical Skills Shortage**

- The agency is finding it very difficult to hire and retain qualified veterinary and epidemiology staff, especially in the south Texas area. The agency is looking for new and inventive ways to recruit for these positions.
- Veterinarians, epidemiologists, laboratory staff, and livestock inspectors must develop increased skills and knowledge to work with new and emerging disease issues, to communicate with various producers and industry groups about the agency's programs, and must demonstrate skill in publicly addressing a variety of audiences.
- All staff will need to develop new technological skills to work with increasingly sophisticated databases, software, GIS/GPS equipment, security infrastructure, cloud technology, and data networks.
- Management staff will need to enhance strategic planning skills and to develop skills in business process planning and execution.
- Grant writing skills for select staff will be required in the future.
- Existing staff should be trained or new staff hired to provide critical project management skills for the agency.
- All staff must be familiar with and practiced in the use of an incident command structure so the agency will be ready and capable of fulfilling its required emergency management roles and responsibilities.
- Select staff will require training in the implementation and maintenance of document management systems.

## **V. Strategy Development**

TAHC will work toward achieving the following goals intended to address workforce competency gaps and the overall anticipated shortage of staff.

### **A. Organizational Structure**

*Goal:* Ensure that staff is allocated appropriately to cover workload demands.

*Action Steps:*

- Analyze current allocations and geographic distribution of workers.
- Develop strategic allocations or distribution of workers based on analysis and projection of future mission priorities.
- Maintain a cost-effective management-to-staff ratio to ensure maximum productivity and accountability of workers.

## **B. Recruitment and Retention Strategies**

*Goal:* Target key recruitment resources to attract qualified candidates, especially in those areas of under-representation in the agency's workforce.

*Action Steps:*

- Identify and contact potential resources for minority recruitment in all areas of the state.
- Identify factors that prevent the agency from competing with other employers and develop strategies to address those factors.

*Goal:* Maintain workplace quality-of-life and develop succession plans.

*Action Steps:*

- Continue to participate in the Survey of Employee Engagement; analyze results, and develop strategies to address areas needing improvement.
- Analyze reasons for employee turnover and identify trends.
- Update human resources policies and practices to address the findings of these analyses and to put emphasis on work-life balance for employees.
- Provide supervisory skills training.
- Identify positions for which succession planning is critical; focus skills and knowledge training on potential successors.
- Strive for salary parity with other state and federal agencies and the private sector.
- Consistently award merit salary actions for exceptional work performance to boost employee morale.
- Continue with alternate work schedules to aid in employee satisfaction.
- Continue to offer and participate in the Employee Wellness program, which includes the annual, Get Fit Texas Challenge.

## **C. Career Development and In-Service Training Programs**

*Goal:* Ensure that staff is equipped with necessary and appropriate skills and knowledge to most effectively accomplish the agency's mission.

*Action Steps:*

- Provide training opportunities for veterinarians to achieve required continuing education units for veterinary licensing; to achieve designated epidemiologist status in a number of diseases; and, to update knowledge and skills in new and emerging animal diseases.
- Support and encourage staff attendance at job-relevant conferences and training programs.
- Establish specific job requirements for necessary skills development.
- Based on identified skill requirements, allow employees to utilize on-line training tools and/or research training sources that are cost-effective.
- Conduct in-house management conferences to focus on leadership skills development and application.
- Encourage employees who seek new challenges by assigning special projects and providing cross-training.
- Ensure that TAHC managers participate in both internal and external seminars to enhance and further develop managerial skills.
- Update and/or establish career ladders for eligible staff.

## **VI. Workforce Plan Evaluation and Revision**

The agency's Workforce Plan will be implemented with the Strategic Plan. It will be reevaluated biennially to determine if adjustments need to be made due to changes in disease diagnoses, changes in technology, or workload shifts.

The Human Resources Department will work in collaboration with executive staff and division directors to ensure that agency workforce is adequately trained, up-to-date on technological advances that may change the way we do business, and to ensure that planned or unexpected turnover and/or retirements do not leave the agency with knowledge and skill gaps that would essentially prevent the agency from achieving its strategic goals.

## VII. Current Organizational Chart

