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GUILLEN ANNOUNCES EFFORTS TO FIGHT CATTLE FEVER TICKS

Millions of Dollars To Be Allocated to Fight Cattle Fever Ticks

AUSTIN – State Representative Ryan Guillen (D-Rural South Texas) is pleased to announce a huge increase in funding for the mitigation of cattle fever ticks. SB 1 includes an additional \$7.2 million from the Economic Stabilization Fund to the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) for the 2018–19 Biennium, CSHB 2 appropriates about \$650,000 in general revenue funds to the TAHC for fiscal year 2017, and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has allocated an additional \$3.7 million, all in an effort to fight the spread of cattle fever ticks.

“Cattle fever ticks are having a devastating effect on ranching in South Texas,” said Guillen. “I commend the increase in funding from the State and the USDA. Providing additional resources to fighting this pest is a necessary step towards controlling the outbreak.”

Cattle fever ticks, scientifically known as *Rhipicephalus annulatus* and *R. microplus*, carry the microscopic parasite that causes cattle fever. This parasite destroys red blood cells, causing acute anemia, high fever, and enlargement of the spleen and liver, and has resulted in the death of over 90 percent of cattle infected.

The Permanent Fever Tick Quarantine Zone is a buffer between Mexico, where these ticks are widespread, and The United States, which has traditionally seen very few of them. As a result of this permanent quarantine being ineffective against the spread of cattle fever ticks, temporary quarantine zones were recently set up in a number of South Texas counties, including Live Oak, Jim Wells, Kleberg, Webb, Zapata and Cameron counties.

SB 1, as passed out of the House, appropriates \$7.2 million for preparedness, response and mitigation of cattle fever ticks for the 2018–19 Biennium. The additional funding will be used for the enhancement of agency efforts to mitigate and eradicate cattle fever ticks in areas outside of the permanent quarantine zone.

If the supplemental budget is passed as is, the TAHC is set to receive \$649,987 in general revenue funds for fiscal 2017 to help mitigate current cattle fever tick outbreaks and respond to potential outbreak threats. If provided, the funding will be used to buy equipment and support necessary travel, salaries, and overtime for responding employees.

In addition to the State's efforts to control the destructive pest, the USDA has allocated \$3.7 million to fighting the spread. The increased funds will be added to the existing budget of \$8.5

million for fiscal year 2017, bringing the total funding for the USDA's cattle fever tick control efforts in Texas to \$12.2 million.

"With this additional funding, I am hopeful that the Texas cattle industry can control the spread of this pest, and soon be able to return to productive operations," said Guillen.

Representative Ryan Guillen serves ten rural South Texas counties in the Texas House of Representatives, including Atascosa, Brooks, Duval, Jim Hogg, Kenedy, La Salle, Live Oak, McMullen, Starr, and Willacy.

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