



Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) in Disasters: Protecting Animal Agriculture

Michael Mendoza – Emergency Management Planner

michael.mendoza@tahc.texas.gov

Dwayne Easley – Emergency Management Specialist

dwayne.easley@tahc.texas.gov

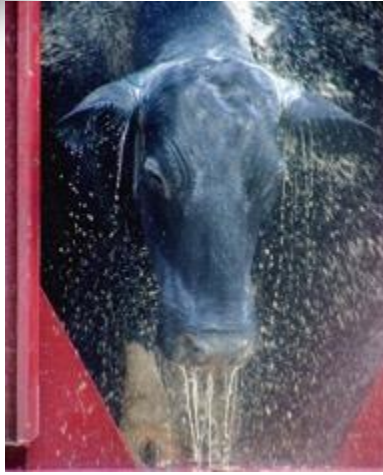


TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION
Proudly Serving Texas Animal Agriculture
Since 1893



TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

The TAHC Mission



☆ 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

☆ To prepare for and respond to emergency situations involving animals





TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

What is the TAHC?

- TAHC is the Lead State Agency (ESF-11) responsible for:
 - ☆ prevention,
 - ☆ mitigation,
 - ☆ preparedness,
 - ☆ response, and
 - ☆ recovery
- from natural disaster incidents where ANIMALS are or may be affected.



TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Amarillo Region

806-354-9335

Beeville Region

361-358-3234

Laredo Region

956-568-5741

Rockdale Region

512-446-2507

Stephenville Region

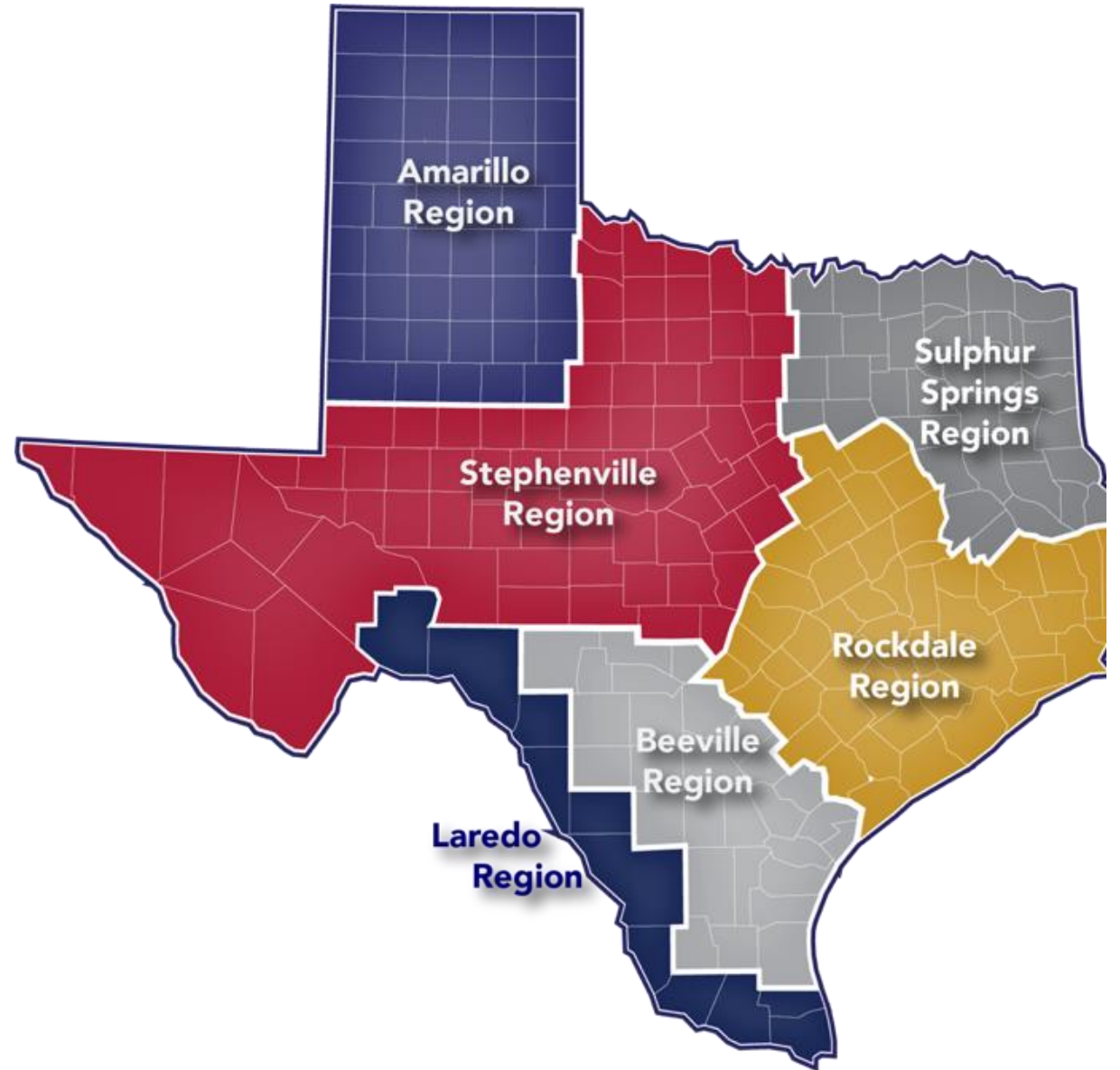
512-556-6277

Sulphur Springs Region

903-919-3748

Central Office - Austin

512-719-0700





TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Role of the TAHC: Livestock & Disease

§ 161.041 of the Texas Agriculture Code:

- ★ Mandates the TAHC to protect all livestock, exotic livestock, domestic fowl, and exotic fowl from specific diseases
- ★ Authorizes the TAHC to make and enforce regulations to prevent, control, and eradicate specific infectious animal diseases which endanger livestock



TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

How TAHC Operates

- ★ Animal Inspections & Permitting
- ★ Animal Disease Investigations
- ★ Animal Disease Surveillance & Testing
- ★ Animal Disease Diagnostics
- ★ Animal Quarantine





TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Role of the TAHC: Natural Disaster & Companion Animals

§ 418.043 of the *Texas Government Code*:

Requires the Division of Emergency Management to assist political subdivisions in developing plans for the humane evacuation, transport, and temporary sheltering of service animals and household pets in a disaster.



TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Our Purpose in Disaster

- ★ Animal Damage Assessments
- ★ Animal Rescue/Capture
- ★ Animal Carcass Disposal Coordination





TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Our Purpose in Disaster

- ★ Animal Issues Committees & Planning Support*
- ★ Animal Sheltering Coordination/Assistance
- ★ Animal Response Operations Coordination Center (AROCC)

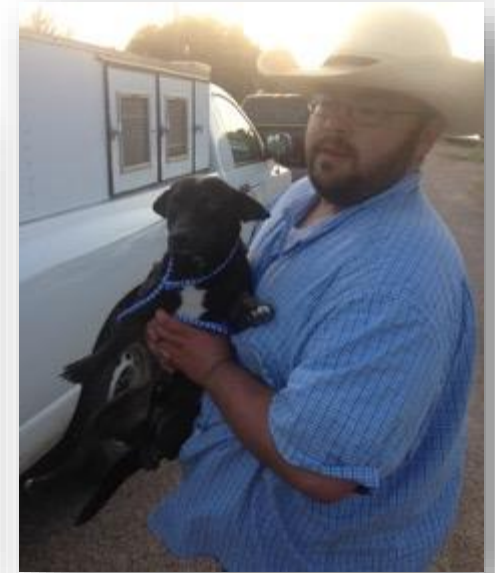




TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

TAHC Response Actions

- Lead agency
- Damage assessment
- Carcass disposal
- Assist local jurisdictions
- Partnerships with other agencies and organizations
- Coordinate resources
- Animal shelter evacuation
- Assist veterinary community
- Information Gathering & Distribution
- Joint Information Center
- SOC Rep





TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Resource Request Methods

- Direct Request to TAHC representative on your AIC
 - Local Request to EOC/DDEOC
 - STAR Request in WebEOC

**Tell us what TASK you need accomplished
We'll send what we must to fill the need.**



TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Questions We'll Ask

What do you need assistance with?

sheltering, veterinary care, coordination, assessment, SME, planning,
equipment/resources

How many head do you need assistance with?

5 – 50 – 500 – 5000 – 500,000

What kind of animal(s)?

Livestock: Horses, Cattle, Sheep/Goats, Swine, Poultry

Pets, Service and Assistive Animals

Exotics

*Note: Native wildlife falls under TPWD



TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

State Animal Response Plan Partners

- Texas A & M AgriLife Extension
- Texas A & M College of Veterinary Medicine VET Team
- Texas Department of Agriculture
- Texas Division of Emergency Management
- USDA Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS-VS)
- USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services
- Texas Veterinary Medical Association (TVMA)
- Texas Farm Bureau
- Texas & Southwestern Cattle Raisers Assn
- Independent Cattlemen's Assn
- Texas Pork Producers Assn
- Texas Poultry Federation
- Texas Sheep & Goat Raisers Assn



TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Turning History into Ability

- TAHC has learned some hard lessons, like everyone else
- One of our greatest teaching moments was Hurricane Harvey
- Massive impact on a scale rarely seen, especially for the animal world
- Issues discovered which we are fighting to this day
- Handling issues caused by Hurricane Harvey has prepared us for the challenges of today



TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

TAHC during Hurricane Harvey

- Prep began at least 1 week before landfall
- Bulk of work done by cities and locals
- Many moved animals beforehand
- Good to know evac sites for animals, or other shelters away from flood zones
- Locals used “past knowledge” from Ike and other storms



TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

TAHC during Hurricane Harvey

Learned that AIC's were
important

TAHC stepped in for gaps, but
overall locals handled

Whole coast was possible "strike
zone", made planning difficult

TAHC resources had to remain
ready to move across coastal
communities

"In and out, and back in" of
Harvey challenged response
efforts





TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Looking Back at Hurricane Harvey

Water, not wind, caused majority of animal issues.

Although Rockport looked bad, animal wise it did alright.

13 Animal Supply Points handled 105 tons of hay and 1200 pounds of cubes.

Upper Texas coastal regions saw 37,000 livestock need assessment, with 16,000 assisted in some way.

AROCC stood up August 26, 2017 until September 11, 2017.





TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Looking Back at Hurricane Harvey

40 state run shelters and 99 independent shelters

Unprecedented cooperation between TAHC and public, non-profit, and private partners

TAHC focused on animal damage assessments and livestock handling requests

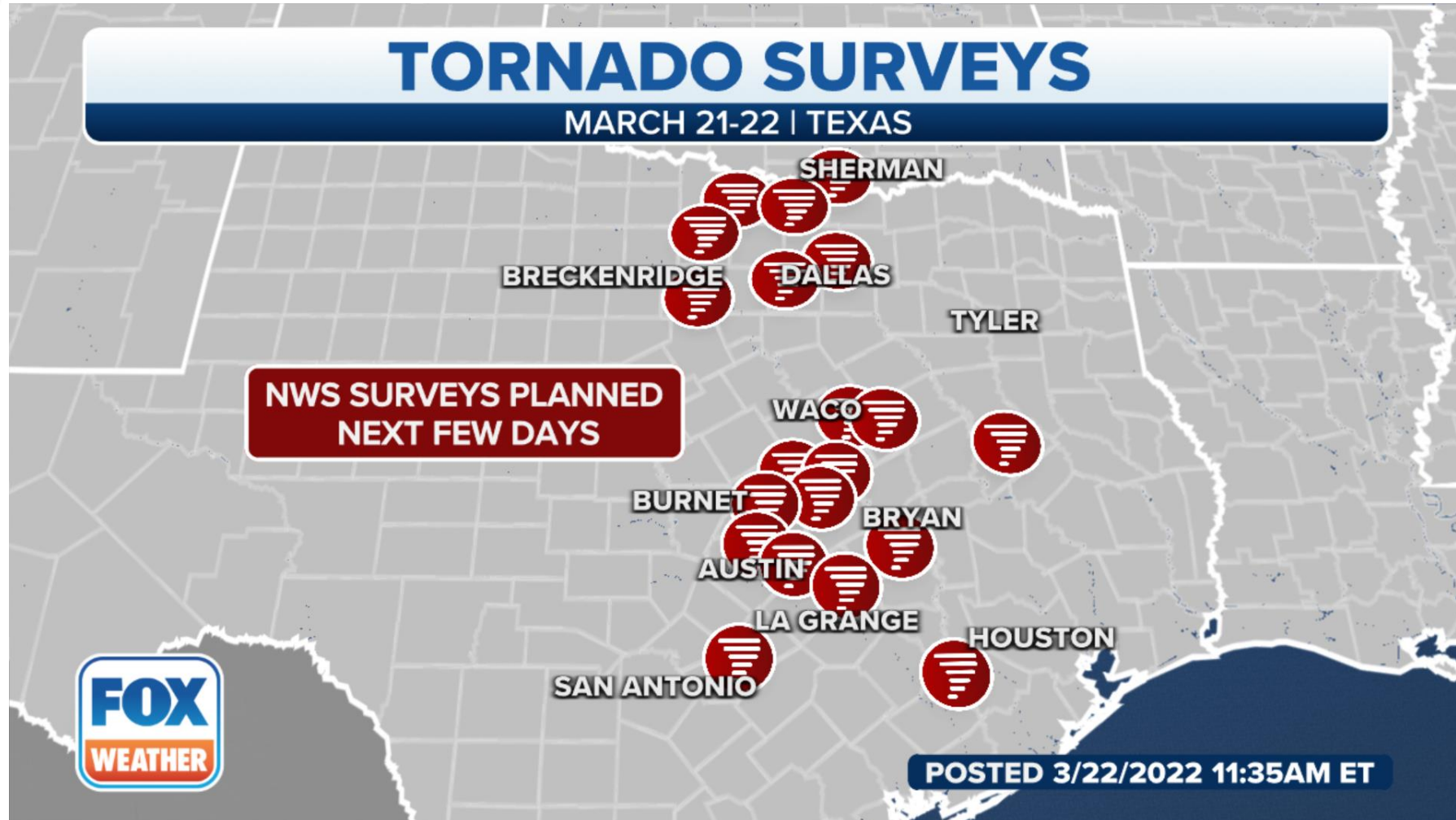
TAHC helped with PIO, carcass disposal info, veterinary info, animal supply info, and other animal resource requests





TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Tornado Outbreak – March 2022





TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Seek and Engage

- Local inspectors proactive in conversation w/ locals
- Extension agents, EMC's, Animal Control, other staff reached out to
- Wildlife Associations extra consideration
- Successfully created “information loop” from inspectors to producers to officials



TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Low Impact, High Readiness

Thankfully, minimal animal issues despite intensity

Inspectors combed areas affected as proactive search

Assisted temporarily at Jack Co. animal shelter hit by tornado, able to handle itself well





TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Eastland Complex Wildfires





TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

As It Happened

- TAHC notified of impact to community of Carbon
- Immediately determined activation necessary
- Local inspectors quickly coordinating needs
- Animal Response Command Post initiated at local sale barn
- Animal Supply Points created across region before inundation
- Rep sent to SOC for ESF-11 representation



TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

First Movements

- TAHC made aware of initial small & large animal sheltering, not yet able to conduct large animal assessments (fire ongoing)
- TAHC staff and OK corrals/other equipment sent for further assistance
- Briefing given at Eastland Sale Barn to evaluate ever-changing conditions
- TAHC begins gathering injured/deceased reports (carcass considerations)
- STAR received/filled
- TAHC PIO activated



TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Can't Do It Alone

All relevant ESF-11 partners
came together quickly

A&M VET Team addressed small
& large animal medical needs
well w/local vets

Agri-Life managed donations to
supply points

Locals handle sheltering points,
animal movements, etc.

TAHC & USDA utilize air assets
to conduct damage assessments

TAHC & Locals managed
information flow, distribute
appropriately





TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Understanding What We're Facing





TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Improvise and Overcome

- Fires ongoing made assessments difficult
- Scene safety could not be guaranteed to remain stable
- Large, expansive terrain made traversing difficult
- Difficult to spot animals from roadways
- Air assessments a thing, limited resources
- Look to your partners!



TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

A “Hidden” Gem

TAHC works very well with USDA year-round, good relationships established and maintained

TAHC approached with idea of utilizing USDA Wildlife Services air assets for outstanding needs

Two birds available, ready to go!

Need to coordinate, can't just launch and wing it

SOC presence is critical, let's see why





TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Behind The Scenes

SOC representation is not just “file and forget”

Rep is eyes, ears, nose and mouth of an organization during activation

In this case, how can we get these birds in the air?

Involved back and forth from field staff, SOC rep, TMD and TFS

Found the “air boss”, got clearance to go

Once safety was handled, time to work!





TEXAS
ANIMAL HEALTH
COMMISSION

Issues That Persist

- Transportation & Evacuation
- Sheltering
- Rescue, Capture, & Contain
- Veterinary Care
- Donation Management
- Identification & Reunification
- Carcass Disposal (Debris Management)
- Public Information



Thank you

Michael Mendoza & Dwayne Easley on behalf of TAHC



TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH COMMISSION
Proudly Serving Texas Animal Agriculture
Since 1893



www.tahc.texas.gov