



United States Department of Agriculture

Research, Education, and Economics
Agricultural Research Service

December 28, 2016

Mr. Boyd H. Parr
President
United States Animal Health Association
4221 Mitchell Avenue
St. Joseph, Missouri 64507

Dear Mr. Parr:

Thank you for your letter of November 18, 2016, and for including the "Cattle Fever Tick Prevention and Treatment Methods for Both Livestock and Wildlife" resolution that was passed by the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) during its 120th annual meeting last month. I appreciate hearing from you, and I thank you for encouraging closer cooperation between the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to promote cattle fever tick (CFT) eradication efforts.

As you may know, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has worked tirelessly against CFT since the 1890s, when scientists Cooper Curtice, Theobald Smith, and Fred Kilbourne, who were working at the Bureau of Animal Industry, first reported that ticks transmitted Texas cattle fever. Significant efforts by both Federal and State Government officials and farm owners in the early half of the twentieth century resulted in CFT being eradicated in the continental United States by 1943, with the exception of a permanent quarantine buffer zone between Mexico and the United States.

It takes constant vigilance to maintain the buffer zone; as the USAHA resolution notes, a new outbreak was detected in the past few years in far southeastern Texas. Current efforts to control the tick along the quarantine zone include a partial tick control barrier fence, livestock movement quarantines, and tick treatments for deer and cattle. Despite these efforts, a large population of white-tailed deer, nilgai antelope, and occasional stray cattle that cross non-fenced areas have contributed to higher rates of fever tick re-infestation in recent years. I am pleased to note that ARS and APHIS personnel continue to work closely on this matter, as they have for many decades, to ensure that CFT does not find a new foothold in the United States.

The research aspect of the CFT eradication program is led by ARS and has four objectives:

1. Reduce the cost of pasture quarantine by developing new methods for treating cattle;
2. Evaluate the efficacy of new technologies (e.g., new acaracides, vaccines, and alternative treatments) to control CFT and mitigate acaricide resistance;
3. Develop methods that decrease the impact of wildlife serving as CFT reservoirs; and
4. Improve our understanding of CFT species distribution and changes that may occur in distribution as a consequence of climate change.

ARS is working diligently with APHIS to find new technologies to combat this disease and to keep both farm and wild animals alike free of CFT. For example, ARS researchers at the Tick and Biting Fly Research Laboratory in Kerrville, Texas, recently delivered the first doses of the

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Mr. Boyd H. Parr

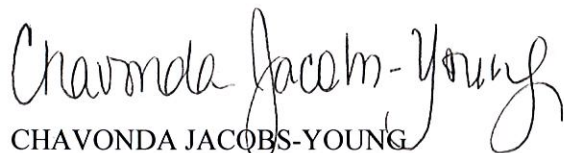
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Bm86 vaccine to the CFT eradication program. This vaccine was a result of more than 5 years of cooperative research and development among ARS researchers in Texas and their colleagues at several other institutions, including the Veterinary Services division of APHIS, the Texas Animal Health Commission, and Zoetis, a company that works on animal health matters. This new vaccine formulation is now being used in an integrated vector control program to control the cattle fever tick.

I applaud the USAHA for taking a stand on this matter and for supporting ARS research endeavors and APHIS on-the-ground CFT monitoring and eradication efforts. I trust that the members of USAHA will continue to support our efforts to better understand the mechanism of CFT disease transmission in wildlife and farmed animals alike.

I appreciate your interest and support for ARS research, and value the benefit of USAHA's input as we make decisions on future research endeavors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Chavonda Jacobs-Young". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

CHAVONDA JACOBS-YOUNG
Administrator