FY 2010-2011 Exceptional Item:
Protection of Texas Livestock and Public Health Sectors

Requested Amount: $5 million (biennial amount)

Program Description

Goals are to ensure that Texas is prepared to detect, control, respond to and recover from disease incursions that may arise from our southern border.

The Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL) and our research partner, Texas AgriLife Research (including its faculty with joint appointments in the College of Veterinary Medicine), will focus diagnostic development and research efforts in the following areas:

• Develop and validate dual-use diagnostic and other technologies (sophisticated IT methods) for detection and development of appropriate protocols for large-scale and/or pen-side use during an emerging, zoonotic and/or tick-borne disease outbreak. (TVMDL)

• Develop better or new vaccines and application methods for control of vector-borne diseases. (AgriLife Research)

• Develop approaches for control and eradication of tick-borne and other vector-borne diseases of animal and public health significance. (AgriLife Research)

• Develop an integrated implementation plan for emergency responses in the food and agriculture sector that links these two parts of The Texas A&M System to the relevant response agencies of Texas and U.S. governments. (TVMDL and AgriLife Research)

Benefit to the State/Results

• Increases development and validation of approaches and technologies that will help control and eradicate vector-borne diseases that threaten Texas livestock and public health.

• Expands the current diagnostic testing and animal disease emergency response capabilities for Texas.

• Leverages the built-in surveillance and early detection capacity that currently exists within TVMDL.

• Protects Texas livestock industry from vector-borne diseases, such as tick-fever and Vesicular Stomatitis Virus.

• Protects the Texas Agriculture and public health sectors from high consequence and other zoonotic disease introduction along our southern border.

Providing excellence in veterinary diagnostic services.
Background Information

The vast border shared between Texas and Mexico and the social and economic interactions occurring along both sides of the border enhance potential transmission of agricultural and public health diseases. Disease outbreaks arising from our southern border threaten both the economic viability of the agricultural (e.g., animal production systems and various aspects of the food chain) and public health sectors. Most recently, the agricultural sector of Texas has been threatened by the re-emergence of the fever tick along our southern border. In addition, the viability of our public health sector is closely linked to that of animal agriculture as a result of the possible introduction of diseases transmissible between animals and humans (zoonotic diseases), such as highly pathogenic avian influenza (bird flu). Disease incursions along this border could cost Texas up to $10 million alone in direct revenues from the agricultural industry. It is critically important that we have tools and systems in place to prevent, monitor for, control, and recover from incursions of these diseases.

For more information, contact:

Tammy Beckham, DVM, Ph.D.
Director, Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory
1 Sippel Road, TAMU 4471
College Station, TX 77843
p: 979.845.9000
f: 979.845.1794
tbeckham@tvdml.tamu.edu

Joe Cox, Assistant Vice Chancellor
for External Relations
AgriLife Agencies
Texas A&M System
113 Jack K. Williams
Administration Building
2142 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-2142
p: 979-845-7984
f: 979-458-4765
joecox@tamu.edu