



NEWSLETTER

Volume 70 / July 2026



Message From the Chief

By: Mandy Murray, DVM, MPVM, PhD, AHB Branch Chief



Greetings and Happy Summer!

Summer is once again upon us – fairs are happening, people and animals are moving around, and hopefully, people are finding some time to do things they enjoy. The Animal Health Branch continues to engage in activities to protect California's animal agriculture. Much of our focus the past few months has been on New World Screwworm (NWS). With the NWS detections in Texas in early June, all states, including California, have increased their preparedness activities. On June 12, 2026, new entry requirements went into effect for animals coming into California from states that have NWS-infested zones. The AHB also continues to refine our NWS response plan should we have a detection here in California. Despite this focus, the AHB staff is also monitoring for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in dairy cattle through ongoing statewide surveillance, as well as other regulatory diseases such as equine infectious anemia and equine herpes virus. And, as always, the AHB staff remain vigilant and ready to answer questions about other regulatory diseases that may affect our animal populations.

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The looming threat of NWS reminds us again that many of these animal health challenges we now face require all of us – CDFA and other state agencies such as Public Health and Fish and Wildlife, USDA and other federal agencies, producers, veterinarians, academia, and the California Animal Health and Food Safety Services Laboratory – working collaboratively, each doing our part, and leveraging our respective strengths to protect the variety of animals and animal agriculture in this state. Thank you for all that you do!

What's all the Buzz on New World Screwworm

By: Dr. Nicki Humphrey & Nick Kimutis, Cattle and Swine Specialists

On June 3, 2026, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) confirmed the presence of NWS in Zavala County, Texas. As of July 10, 2026 there have been 35 confirmed cases (19 cattle, 2 dogs, 4 goats, 10 sheep) in Texas and New Mexico. Fourteen of these cases are now inactive although the infested zones surrounding these cases will remain open until it is determined that there are no further reproducing fly populations in the area meaning movement restrictions for these zones will continue. Vigilance when moving animals from these higher risk areas will be important to protecting California's livestock industries.

What Veterinarians Need to Know About Moving Animals Under California's New World Screwworm Statewide Entry Requirements

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has implemented a statewide quarantine to prevent the introduction of New World Screwworm (NWS) into California. Although NWS is not present in California, these movement requirements apply to susceptible animals entering the state from NWS infested zones within a state or from states with active NWS infested zones.

If you or your clients are purchasing, receiving or arranging transport of animals into California, it is important to understand these requirements before animals are shipped.

General Requirements for Animals Entering California from states with NWS Infestation Zones

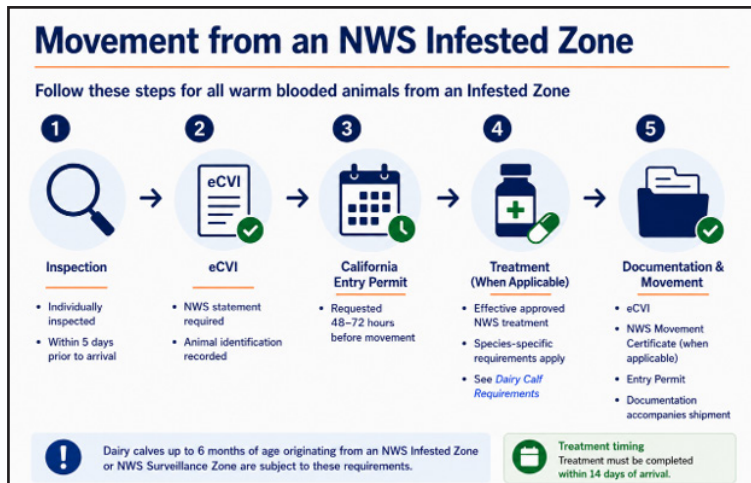
Animals originating from an NWS-infested zone, surveillance zone, or from parts of a state with an active infested zone and outside of the zones must meet specific movement requirements prior to arrival in California.

Veterinarians should ensure that:

- Animals showing signs of or suspected of NWS infestation cannot enter California

- Required Interstate electronic Certificates of Veterinary Inspection (eCVIs) are submitted electronically through an approved electronic eCVI system.
- Animals are accompanied by all required documentation during transport.
- eCVIs contain the statement "All animals were inspected and found free of evidence of New World Screwworm infestation."
- A California Entry Permit is obtained by contacting CDFA at 909-247-8789 at least 48 hours prior to movement and preferably 72 hours in advance of arrival. Questions can also be emailed to: NWSpermitting@cdfa.ca.gov.

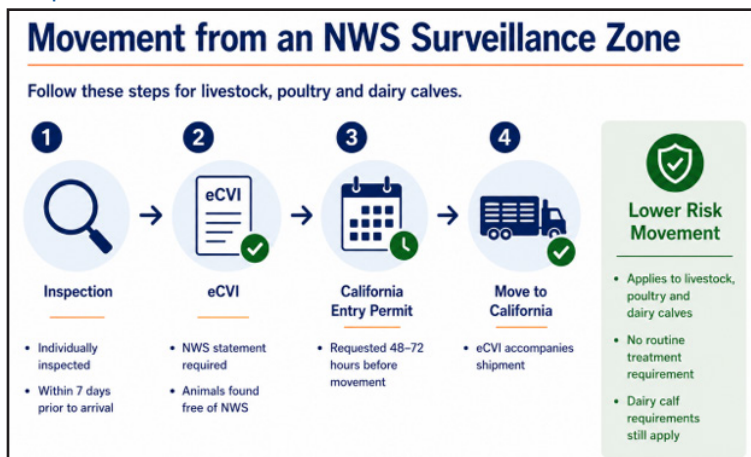
Requirements for Animals from NWS-Infested Zones



Animals originating from an NWS-infested zone must:

- Be individually inspected within five (5) days of arrival by a USDA-accredited veterinarian or authorized animal health official and obtain a NWS Movement Certificate (Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) has a system generating these certificates).
- Be accompanied by an eCVI that is valid for five (5) days from issuance.
- Receive an approved systemic NWS treatment, when applicable to the species being moved, administered no more than fourteen (14) days from arrival.
- Have official animal identification recorded on the eCVI.

Requirements for Animals from NWS Surveillance Zones



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Animals originating from an NWS-surveillance zone must:

- Be individually inspected within seven (7) days prior to arrival.
- Be accompanied by an eCVI that is valid for seven (7) days from issuance.

Requirements for Dairy Calves 6 months of age and younger when coming from NWS infested or surveillance zones

Special Requirements for Dairy Calves

Additional safeguards are required for dairy calves due to increased risk associated with healing navels and wounds.

Inspection Individually inspected within 5 days prior to movement.	Treatment Treated with an approved systemic product.	Navel Care Navel must be treated if calf is less than 3 weeks of age.	Permit & eCVI California Entry Permit and eCVI required before movement.	

These additional requirements help reduce the risk of New World Screwworm introduction.

Dairy calves up to 6 months of age originating from an NWS Infested Zone or NWS Surveillance Zone are subject to these requirements.

- Be individually inspected within five (5) days of arrival by a USDA-accredited veterinarian or authorized animal health official and obtain a NWS Movement Certificate (TAHC has a system generating these certificates).
- Be accompanied by an eCVI that is valid for five (5) days from issuance.
- Receive an approved systemic avermectin NWS treatment administered no more than fourteen (14) days from arrival.
- Neonatal calves with fresh navels must have navels dipped with an EPA approved product.
- Have official animal identification recorded on the eCVI.

Upon Arrival in California

All animals entering California under these provisions must be inspected within 12 hours of arrival into California at the destination premises. At this time these inspections can be completed by the animal owner and their personnel.

If any animal is found with evidence of NWS myiasis (larvae infestation):

- The animal must be isolated to its own pen (preferably on concrete)
- Reported to CDFA within 24 hours at 866-922-2473.

The requirements are intended to protect California's livestock industries from the devastating impacts of NWS. Client's planning interstate movements should work closely with their veterinarians, livestock suppliers, and transporters to ensure all inspection, treatment, documentation, and permitting requirements are met before shipment.

To determine whether the premises of origin you are looking to move cattle from is within a zone in Texas please use the

mapping tool located [Here](https://tahc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/basic/index.html?appid=fc8902674b004a778f44e3fe219c255f) (https://tahc.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/basic/index.html?appid=fc8902674b004a778f44e3fe219c255f).

To determine whether the premises of origin you are looking to move cattle from is within a zone in New Mexico please use the mapping tool located [Here](https://nmsu.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/lookup/index.html?appid=c77423a2c4a9471190063fedfd76d53) (https://nmsu.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/lookup/index.html?appid=c77423a2c4a9471190063fedfd76d53).

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Update

By: Felicia Pohl, Research Scientist II

California met the criteria to self-declare free from Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in poultry on April 17, 2026. California has not had any new HPAI detections in commercial/backyard poultry flocks for a few months and minimal detections in wildlife. Letters were sent out to industry on June 1, 2026 to inform them that at this time, we feel it is safe to allow outdoor access for poultry (as required for organic certification) with proper biosecurity measures in place.

USDA Biosecurity Reimbursement Payment Highlights for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

By: Kavishti Kokaram, DVM, DACVPM, Supervising Veterinarian

Poultry producers continue to see updates to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) response and preparedness requirements since the USDA's Animal and Plant



Health Inspection Service (APHIS) publish the interim rule regarding HPAI indemnity payments in the Federal Register ([9 CFR Part 53](#)). On December 31, 2024, USDA, APHIS implemented new biosecurity audit requirements for commercial poultry premises as a condition for receiving indemnity payments related to HPAI losses. Producers affected by HPAI (infected premises and those within control areas) are required to pass a biosecurity audit as part of this Biosecurity Compliance Audit Program (BCAP) before placing birds onto their premises. This interim rule from USDAAPHIS emphasizes the importance of on-farm biosecurity audits and incentivizes producers to continue

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implementing biosecurity measures to prevent the introduction and spread of HPAI.

In support of industry and stakeholders and their efforts to meet the requirements of the BCAP program, USDA, APHIS has established two voluntary biosecurity assessments, [Wildlife Biosecurity Assessment \(WBA\)](#) and [Biosecurity Incentive-Focused Assessment \(BIFA\)](#). These programs provide:

- Opportunities for producers to be proactive in their preparedness;
- A reimbursement platform for remediations needed to bolster on-farm biosecurity.
- Up to 75 percent of the cost of required remediations—up to \$25,000, depending on flock size—to address the highest-risk biosecurity issues identified during these assessments (available for producers completing either of the BCAP or voluntary BIFA/WBA assessments)

Additionally, producers who have successfully completed a BCAP, BIFA, or WBA, can submit a Biosecurity Supplemental Improvement Proposal (BSIP) to propose additional biosecurity improvements beyond those identified in their original USDA assessment to maximize

their total reimbursement allowance. Further information on the USDA APHIS BCAP rule and recommendations for HPAI risk mitigation for producers can be found on USDA's [Biosecurity Assessments – Resources & Guidance | APHIS](#), as well as the CDFA webpage: [CDFA - Animal Health - Avian Influenza](#).

To better serve industry and stakeholders, the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Animal Health Branch (CDFA, AHB) BCAP team will soon be launching a comprehensive website to compile available resources and information for industry. Resources would support producers being able to create a biosecurity plan for their premises or modify their existing biosecurity plan to meet current USDA BCAP requirements. Such resources include biosecurity templates, map-making tools and tutorials, and various webinars that highlight some of the important aspects of the program and biosecurity in general. Direct industry engagement and outreach will be coordinated upon completion and launch of the webpage to introduce these various resources.



A Practical HPAI Disposal Solution Implemented in Northern California Duck Facility

By: Dr. Nicholas Edelman, Animal Health Branch, Emergency Preparedness and Response Section

In late October 2025, a commercial duck operation in Northern California reported increased mortality. Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was confirmed following diagnostic submissions to the UC Davis California Animal Health and Food Safety (CAHFS) Laboratory, with confirmation by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL). A joint assessment by the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA's) Animal Health Branch (AHB), USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Veterinary Services (VS) field personnel, and disposal subject matter experts identified significant barriers to routine mortality management: most of the duck houses could not accommodate indoor composting, the county restricted outdoor composting, offsite composting and landfill were cost-prohibitive, and incineration and burial are not routinely permitted in California. USDA restrictions for commercial premises also prevented following infected material in place for 120 days. To mitigate the disease risk in a high-density poultry area, the producer transported poultry carcasses out of the county, while approximately 1,000 tons of infected material (manure, litter, eggs, feed) remained onsite.

To maintain biosecurity and continuity of business for surrounding operations, the multidisciplinary team conducted cost and risk analyses and consulted disposal colleagues, culminating in a decision to employ an interim protocol using hermetically sealed silage bags to achieve contained anaerobic digestion and acidification. This site-specific approach was reviewed and



accepted by county officials, CDFA AHB, and USDA APHIS VS, and was implemented on the premises. The infected material was sealed for 30 days, with temperature and pH monitored throughout the process. After 30 days, the material in the silage bags was sampled and submitted for official NVSL diagnostic testing. The laboratory reported negative results for HPAI, demonstrating virus elimination within the bagged materials. Subsequently, the entire lot was permitted for transport off-site to a local fertilizer plant for routine processing.

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This case underscores how flexible, collaborative solutions can address structural, environmental, and regulatory constraints that limit traditional disposal methods—protecting animal health and supporting industry continuity under complex conditions. Dr. Nicholas Edelman will deliver a presentation on this case study during the International Symposium on Animal Mortality Management in June 2026.

Moving Towards Collaborative Response

By: Dr. Steven Gallego, CDFA Veterinarian in Charge, Redding District

"It takes a village to raise a child" is an aphorism many may have heard before. It means that family and non-family all contribute in some way to the successful development of children. Collaborative medicine is similarly based; successful health care is the result of many different disciplines working together to ensure human health care is optimized.

CDFA has seen and appreciates the efforts producers across the state are making to assist in the response to HPAI. From early reporting to assisting with or performing necessary on-farm operations, we are seeing the rise of collaborative regulatory medicine.

As one example, CDFA and poultry producers in Sonoma County are working together on improving the response to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). These producers have recognized that speed is of the essence in reducing the risk of spreading the virus to unaffected neighbors and have begun to acquire and share big-ticket equipment items previously brought to the fight by the government. Foamers, CO2 carts, and trained personnel are now made immediately available from producers to any other producer in the area when the CAHFS lab detects a non-negative HPAI test result. On a couple of occasions during the last two HPAI seasons, producers donated labor and materials - assisting CDFA to quickly depopulate flocks and, in my opinion, halt the further spread of the virus. These producers' commitment to rapid response and biosecurity is further demonstrated by their paying laborers who were on HPAI-positive farms to stay home for 72 hours before returning to their regular work operations.

In addition to depopulation, some producers have also begun performing their own disposal activities. They are committed to using the latest composting or dehydration technologies and thereby eliminating the cost of transporting materials for off-site processing.

These developments are reminders that historically, private industry eventually assumes the duties the government started and, in many instances, improves upon those activities. Look

at the electrification and communication infrastructures we use today as examples, as well as the burgeoning space travel industry.

Given the limited resources we often have, collaborative veterinary medicine is proving indispensable in our collective efforts to fight these diseases and produce nutritious, affordable, and readily available food to the consumer.

Fair Season is Here!

By: Dr. Natalie Ward, CDFA Veterinarian in Charge, Tulare District

With fair season upon us, it's important to remember to practice biosecurity both for yourself and your animals. Fairs are a great time for the public to learn about farms and experience all the animal agriculture that happens in our valley, but they also present an increased chance for the spread of diseases, both between animals and between people and animals.



It's important to remember that even though animals that go to the fair are healthy and appear free of diseases, it is still possible for animals to share diseases and, when they return home, bring those diseases back to their herd mates. It is also possible for the people visiting a fair to bring diseases from their own animals with them, or for the stress of the fair to increase an animal's chances of becoming sick while at the fair or shortly after.

The goal of having a biosecurity plan for your animal(s) is to reduce the risk of introducing new diseases to your home flock or herd. While all risks cannot be eliminated, you can do a lot to reduce them. Major goals include reducing contact with other animals and people at the fair, reducing stress for your animal, and keeping a close eye on your animal for signs of illness. It is important to help educate fairgoers on why, even though it's fun, they shouldn't be petting/touching animals that are not part of a petting zoo or other exhibit that expressly allows them to pet the animals. An average fairgoer probably doesn't realize that just the act of touching one animal, and then another, can be enough to spread a disease, or even to be exposed to a disease themselves.

As an exhibitor, you can also do a lot to protect your animals at home during the fair just by changing clothes and washing your

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hands before feeding or being around animals at home. This reduces the chances of you accidentally bringing home a new disease or even a parasite. You should also consider how you will house your animal if it comes home from the fair – your best management practice is to isolate that animal with no nose-to-nose contact for at least a few weeks and monitor for signs of disease. If you have questions about best practices as we head into fair season, you can contact your local CDFA Animal Health Branch, talk to your fair board, or consult with your veterinarian

Equine Herpesvirus-1 (EHV-1) Season

By: Katie Hatch, Research Scientist

As spring is upon us in California, so is Equine Herpesvirus-1 (EHV-1) season. EHV-1 infection in horses can cause respiratory disease, abortion in mares, neonatal foal death, and neurological disease. The neurological presentation of the disease is known as Equine Herpes Myeloencephalopathy (EHM) and may be caused by damage to blood vessels of the brain and spinal cord associated with EHV-1 infection. EHV-1 can be spread through direct horse-to-horse contact, airborne transmission and indirectly through contact with objects contaminated with the virus, such as clothing, human hands, tack, trailers, feed/water buckets and wash rags.

Whenever horses travel to and commingle at an equine event, there is always a risk of disease. To help mitigate this risk, owners should practice proper biosecurity when attending an equine event. Basic biosecurity measures to follow to decrease potential disease spread at equine events include:

- Limit horse-to-horse contact
- Limit horse-to-human-to-horse contact
- Avoid use of communal water sources
- Avoid sharing of equipment unless thoroughly cleaned and disinfected between uses
- Monitor horses for clinical signs of disease

Common clinical signs for an EHV-1 infection can include:

- Fever
- Respiratory signs such as
 - Coughing
 - Snotty nose
- Neurological signs such as
 - Trouble urinating
 - Ataxia
 - Hind end weakness
 - Weak tail tone
 - Recumbency

For horses showing compatible clinical signs, owners should

contact their veterinarian. Veterinarians should collect nasal swabs and whole blood in an EDTA tube (purple top tube) on the suspect horse and contact CDFA for submission instructions.

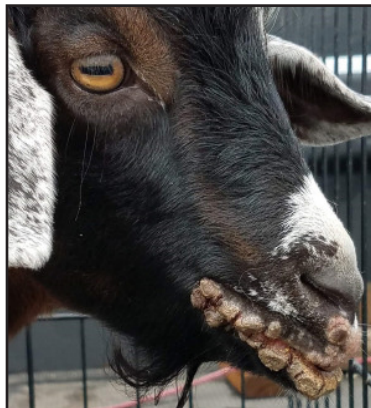
Another way for owners to mitigate risk of severe disease is to properly vaccinate their horses. The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) has vaccination guidelines available [Here](https://aaep.org/guidelines-resources/vaccination-guidelines/) (<https://aaep.org/guidelines-resources/vaccination-guidelines/>). While vaccines do not guarantee that a horse will not get a certain disease like EHV-1, it does decrease the likelihood of severe infection and death. More information on EHV-1 can be found on the CDFA website [Here](https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/animal_health/equine_herpes_virus.html) (https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/animal_health/equine_herpes_virus.html).

Orf, It's More Than Just a Funny Name

By: Danny Dickason, DVM, MCM, Small Ruminant Program

It is true that I am not a human doctor and therefore diagnosing the cause of those pustules on your face and hands would be professionally inappropriate. But I can say that if you recently handled sheep or goats with crusty skin lesions prior to developing your pustules, you may be experiencing a zoonotic disease called Contagious Ecthema, or "Orf".

Contagious Ecthema/Orf also goes by the names of Contagious Pustular Dermatitis and Sore Mouth and is caused by a parapoxvirus that has an affinity for keratinocytes, or skin cells, and thus infection manifests as skin lesions. The virus is spread through direct contact with affected skin, scabs, and lesions that have fallen off, contaminated objects that have come into contact with infected material, and even the soil and other areas of the environment. In sheep and goats, lesions will most commonly be seen on the lips of young animals, sometimes extending onto the face and ears, as well as the coronet (the skin above the hoof line) and sometimes the udders of ewes. Luckily, the disease typically runs its course in 1-4 weeks with symptomatic treatment and skin scabs and crusts fall off and leave more normal skin in their wake. Diagnosis is usually based on visual characteristics but PCR (polymerase chain reaction) is available for situations



requiring a more definitive diagnosis.

So why do we care about a disease that typically resolves on its own? Great question. Unfortunately, affected animals can go off feed (not eat normally) and therefore fail to gain weight, resulting in production losses. Additionally, the skin lesions can become

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But there is good news for producers and handlers of sheep and goats who want to maximize their production efficiency and animal welfare and minimize unsightly skin blemishes: there are approaches to avoiding introducing, spreading, and contracting Orf! First, it is a good idea to quarantine new additions to a flock or herd for two to three weeks while monitoring for signs of Orf before introducing them to the rest of your animals. Second, farm tools, water troughs, shearing equipment, etc. should be disinfected regularly because the virus persists on objects and in the environment (for months in soil and years in skin crusts!). And lastly, humans who are handling sheep and goats should wear non-permeable gloves and wash their hands with soap and water after handling animals and their associated farm equipment. By doing so, we can all sleep well knowing we are doing our part to avoid a potentially costly, uncomfortable, and unsightly disease of our small ruminants!

as exclusive reliance on chemical control can contribute to faster development of resistance.

The California Animal Health and Food Safety Laboratory (CAHFS) has obtained protocols for multiplex screening real-time PCR for *Theileria/Anaplasma* and a PCR for genotyping *Theileria orientalis* positive samples.

Premises Identification Numbers (PINs)

By: Kristen Cox, Environmental Scientist, Livestock Movement

A United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Premises Identification Number (PIN) is a unique identifier (a seven-digit alphanumeric code) permanently assigned to a single physical location (911 address) where livestock or poultry are managed.

These numbers are critical tools for food safety and food security, animal disease traceability, regulatory compliance, and emergency response. PINs allow animal health officials to quickly and accurately identify the location of animals and agricultural products during disease outbreaks or food safety emergencies. This also allows regulatory authorities to implement critical movement control measures to ensure biocontainment of disease and protection of the food supply chain.

Participation in this program is voluntary, however a PIN is required to purchase official USDA animal identification (ID) devices, such as electronic “840” ear tags in cattle and swine or scrapie tags in sheep and goats, and may be required during disease outbreaks when submitting laboratory samples or requesting to move animals off your premises. With the variety of disease challenges faced by the agricultural industry in the recent past and the potential for near future challenges, producers are highly encouraged to ensure they have a PIN associated with their various premises/operations ahead of an actual disease event in order to facilitate continuity of business and sustained protection of the state’s and country’s food supply.

To register your California premises and obtain a PIN, complete [AHB Form 76-196-W \(Location Number Request\)](#) and submit it to your [Animal Health Branch \(AHB\) district office](#) or the contact on the application.

If you would like to confirm whether you may already have a PIN or need to update your contact information, contact CDFA at (866) 325-5681 or PAIS@cdfa.ca.gov.

Information on how to order official ID devices per species:

- Cattle and bison - [Cattle & Bison Official Identification, No-Cost Electronic Tag Program for Producers, Veterinarians, and Approved Tagging Sites](#)
- Sheep and goats - [Sheep & Goat Official Identification](#)
- Swine - [Swine Official Identification](#)

AB 411: Routine On-Farm Livestock Composting (The C.A.T.T.L.E. Act)

By: Paula Batarseh, Branch Chief, Meat, Poultry and Egg Safety Branch, California Department of Food and Agriculture

AB 411, also known as the C.A.T.T.L.E Act, was signed by the Governor in October 2025. The bill became effective on January 1st this year, prompting producers to ask the obvious question, “When and how will I be able to compost my carcasses?”

The new law mandates CDFA collaboration with sister regulatory agencies at the state and local level to draft a Best Management Practices (BMP) document. These BMPs will outline standards and protocols to be followed by the producers when conducting composting activities. Importantly, the BMP document must be adopted by the CDFA Secretary before producers can commence composting operations. Under this new law, on-farm carcass composting is subject to several strict provisions. The total amount of composting material onsite—including livestock carcasses—cannot exceed 100 cubic yards at any one time. Composting under the C.A.T.T.L.E. Act provisions is prohibited for livestock that were euthanized with barbiturates, died from a CDFA-reportable disease, or died in a location under quarantine. All carcasses and carbon materials must originate from agricultural sites owned or leased by the livestock owner. Composting also must occur on property owned or leased by the livestock producer. Carcasses moved from the site of animal death must be composted within the same county or an adjacent county, and transport must comply with all state and local regulations. Operators must notify their local enforcement agency and regional water quality control board within 30 days of commencing operations. The cured compost must be applied only to agricultural sites owned or leased by the owner of the livestock that produced it.

CDFA has initiated a series of highly focused, interactive discussions with regulatory agencies potentially affected by the bill. These include, but are not limited to, CalRecycle and the State and regional water boards. The goal of interagency collaboration is to draft a BMP document that is useful to producers and is both technically sound and protective of public health, animal health, and the environment. Although the new law does not require a public review process, in the spirit of transparency and valuing public input and feedback, CDFA will keep stakeholders informed regarding the progress on drafting the BMP document and will solicit public input from stakeholders before finalizing the document.

If you should have any questions about the implementation of AB411, please contact CDFA Meat, Poultry and Egg Safety Branch at Email: cdfa.mpes_feedback@cdfa.ca.gov; Phone: 916-900-5004

Ontario New World Screwworm (NWS) Tabletop Exercise Strengthens Preparedness

By: John Montalbano, Emergency Preparedness & Response Section

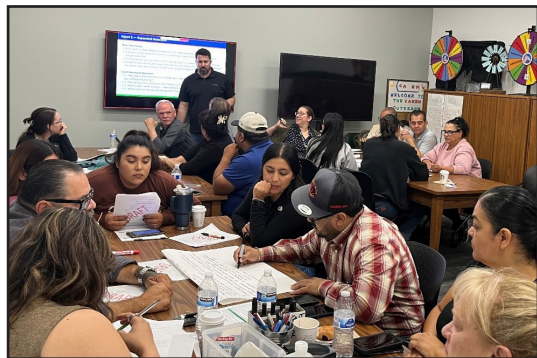
On April 14, 2026, the Animal Health Branch conducted a New World Screwworm (NWS) tabletop exercise at the Ontario District Office in Ontario, California. The event simulated a realistic NWS incident scenario to test and refine participants' operational responses.

Exercise objectives included:

- Demonstrate the NWS response plan framework
- Validate the NWS plan functions
- Clarify roles and responsibilities across state and federal agencies
- Identify district-level gaps and improvement opportunities

Twenty-three participants from Ontario District Office and the USDA attended the tabletop exercise. Participants reported that the exercise improved their understanding of response roles and responsibilities and increased their confidence in responding to a potential NWS incident. Continuing this process in all AHB districts will further enhance the AHB's preparedness and response efforts as the AHB continues to strengthen readiness for a potential NWS response.

Exercising response plans before a real-world emergency allows responders to practice critical skills and understand their roles in a low-risk environment. This helps identify any gaps in the Response Plan and improves coordination within and outside our agency. Not only does exercising a response plan help to improve the contents of the plan, while in parallel improving our team's understanding of how to implement the plan, but there is an added benefit that exercising the response plan for NWS offers the ability to practice many response roles that are universally



employed in any animal disease outbreak. This means that by preparing for NWS, we are simultaneously preparing for other animal health threats.

Foreign Animal Disease Investigations December 16, 2025 - March 15, 2026

By: Alireza Javidmehr, DVM, MPVM, Ph.D., Emergency Preparedness and Response Sec

Monitoring foreign animal diseases (FADs) and their potential impacts on the food supply chain and international trade is crucial for national security. Although these diseases have either been eradicated or have not occurred in the United States, a widespread outbreak could have serious consequences. This includes posing a public health risk if they can be transmitted to humans. Therefore, early detection and immediate action to control and eradicate FADs are essential. California is investing significant resources to protect the livestock and poultry industries against FAD outbreaks. You can learn about the critical activities when an FAD is detected in the state by viewing 13 infographics and three short video clips on the [CDFA Preparedness and Response web page](#).

In the past few years, the New World Screwworm (NWS), once eradicated from the US in 1966, has been spreading north from South America through Central America and Mexico, prompting a robust and aggressive response from US authorities. A permanent sterile fly barrier zone in Panama had held the pest in check for decades, but the barrier was breached in 2023. Recent NWS confirmations in Texas, New Mexico, and northern Mexico have put California's livestock industry on high alert. Following this northward spread, which includes cases in southern Mexico and Central America, California state officials are coordinating with state and federal agencies to prepare for potential infestations. The Animal Health Branch (AHB) is developing response protocols for surveillance, reporting, and management of any potential infestations, and is urging veterinarians and producers to be vigilant for signs of the pest.

On July 26th, 2024, California's first case of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in dairy cows was detected, triggering the activation of the unified incident command system. Since the first detection, the CDFA Animal Health and Food Safety has been responding to the incident in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Veterinary Services (VS).

Between December 16, 2025, and March 15, 2026, California FAD diagnosticians investigated 71 FAD-suspicious cases (Table 1). All of the 64 investigations conducted on swine were to rule out Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) in pigs being shipped to slaughterhouses. The lesions observed in these cases were found to be caused by Senecavirus A (SVA). Although SVA is an endemic disease in the US, it triggers an investigation for FAD due to the similarity of lesions to FMD. It is essential to treat any animal diseases presenting similar signs to FADs as if they were

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Table 1. Summary of FAD Investigations from December 16, 2025 to March 15, 2026

AHB Districts	Disease	Species	Sample Type	Number of Investigations	Destination Lab*
Modesto	Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), Vesicular Stomatitis Virus (VSV)	Bovine	Swab	1	NVSL
	FMD, Seneca virus A (SVA)	Porcine	Swab	51	KSVDL
Ontario	New World Screwworm (NWS)	Avian (Great Horned Owl)	Maggots	1	NVSL
	NWS	Canine	Swab	2	NVSL
	VSV	Equine	Swab, Serum	1	NVSL
Redding	African Swine Fever, Classical Swine Fever	Porcine	Swab	1	KSVDL
Tulare	FMD, SVA	Porcine	Swab	13	KSVDL
	VSV	Equine	Swab	1	NVSL

*NVSL: National Veterinary Services Laboratory
KSVDL: Kansas State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory

FADs until a definitive diagnosis can be made.

All Emergency Conditions listed in the [California reportable animal disease list](#) must be reported to the local animal health authorities within 24 hours. Contact information for the AHB district offices is provided on the last page of this newsletter and on the reportable disease list.

AHB Staff convene at the AHB Statewide Meeting

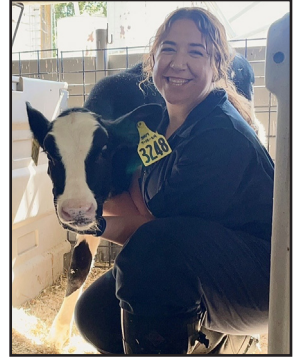
in Santa Cruz, CA, May 5 – 7, 2026, to receive updates on our regulatory programs and NWS preparedness



Animal Health Branch Staff Biographies

Delaney Sarantopulos, Analyst I

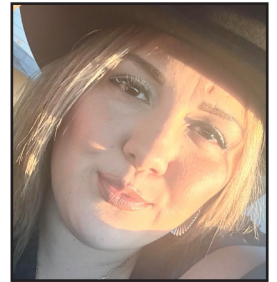
My name is Delaney Sarantopulos, and I have been involved in agriculture since high school, when I became a member of Elk Grove FFA. I graduated from Chico State in 2023 with a B.S. in Animal Science, and during this time, I worked for the College of Agriculture University Farm as part of the Sheep Unit student management team and served as an Undergraduate Research Assistant evaluating antimicrobial use in California sheep operations. I then continued my research experience at the University of Idaho, where I spent two years working as a Graduate Research Assistant examining the impacts of wildfire smoke exposure on dairy calf health and earned my M.S. degree in Animal Science. I am excited to return to my hometown in the Sacramento area and join the Animal Health Branch, where I can continue contributing to efforts that support animal agriculture and protect livestock health. In my free time, I enjoy reading, hanging out with my cats, and traveling to the beach.



Alma Martinez, Analyst II

My name is Alma Martinez, and I am an Analyst II with the Animal Health Branch Emergency Preparedness and Response Section. I joined the AHB February this year! I have been working for the State of California since 2011 and have had the opportunity to work for several departments throughout my state career. Before joining Animal Health Branch, I worked in Personnel and Human Resources supporting recruitment and workforce planning. I also worked for the California State Athletic Commission, where I assisted with licensing and regulatory activities for professional combatative athletes and sports events throughout California.

In my current role, I support emergency preparedness and response efforts, focused on HPAI and NWS preparedness. As a new member of the team, I have enjoyed learning about animal health programs, meeting colleagues across the branch, and gaining a better understanding of the important work being done to protect California's livestock industry. When I'm not working, you'll usually find me spending time with my husband and four children, helping manage our family painting construction business, or cheering from the sidelines at my kids' sporting and dance events. Our family stays busy year-round, and I wouldn't have it any other way! I am excited to be part of the Animal Health Branch and look forward to getting to know everyone and continuing to support our important work.



Ikenna Igwe, Veterinarian (General)

Ikenna is a veterinarian specializing in animal health and research. He earned his degree in 2013 and has worked extensively as clinician and poultry veterinarian. His major interests are pathology and epidemiology of infectious diseases of poultry and farm animals, and laboratory diagnostics.

Since February 2026, he is a district veterinarian with the CDFA, where he's working with a supportive team to contribute to the branch's mission. Outside of work, Ikenna enjoys teaching, soccer, music and travelling



Edwin "Chester" Maldonado, Environmental Scientist

My name is Edwin "Chester" Maldonado and I am an Environmental Scientist with the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Animal Health Branch. I was born and raised in southern New Mexico, where I grew up around horse racing as my father worked as a racehorse trainer. Being surrounded by animals from an early age sparked my passion for animal health and led me to earn a Bachelor's degree in Animal Science from New Mexico State University.

Prior to joining CDFA, I worked for the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) at the ports of entry in Columbus and Santa Teresa, New Mexico, before advancing to lead field operations in Nogales, Arizona. These experiences provided me with valuable knowledge in animal health, disease prevention, and cross-border collaboration.

I am excited to bring my background and experience to CDFA and contribute to protecting California's animal agriculture. In my free time, I enjoy visiting national parks, walking my dog Lulu, and spending time with friends and family.



Contact Information

■ Animal Health Branch

Dr. Amanda Murray, Branch Chief

1220 N Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Headquarters: (916) 900-5002
Fax: (916) 900-5333
Permit Line: (916) 900-5052

Email: ahbfeedback@cdfa.ca.gov

Website: www.cdfa.ca.gov/ahfss/Animal_Health/Index.html

■ District Offices Veterinarian In Charge (VIC)

Redding

Dr. Steven Gallego
1819 Keystone Court
Redding, CA 96003
(530) 225-2140

Modesto

Dr. Adam Smith
3800 Cornucopia Way, Suite F
Modesto, CA 95358
(209) 491-9350

Tulare

Dr. Natalie Ward
18760 Road 112
Tulare, CA 93274
(559) 685-3500

Ontario

Dr. Alisha Olmstead
3800 Concours Street, Suite 150
Ontario, CA 91764
(909) 947-5932

■ Animal Health and Food Safety Services

Dr. Amanda Murray, Acting State Veterinarian
Dr. Stephen Beam, Director
(916) 900-5000

■ Other AHFSS Branches

Bureau of Livestock Identification
Harry Piek, Chief
(916) 900-5006

Milk and Dairy Food Safety
Robin Trindade, Assistant Branch Chief
(916) 900-5008

Meat, Poultry and Egg Safety
Paula Batarseh, Chief
(916) 900-5004

Antimicrobial Use and Stewardship
Dr. Edie Marshall, Chief
(916) 576-0300

Animal Care
Dr. Elizabeth Cox, Chief
(916) 900-5000

■ United States Department of Agriculture

Dr. Donald Herriott
District Director, District 3

Dr. Paul Sciglibaglio
Area Veterinarian in Charge, NM/CA/HI/PT
Field Operations – District 3

USDA, APHIS, VS, SPRS
(916) 854-3950
Toll Free: (877) 741-3690

Animal Health Branch Programs

- [Animal Disease Traceability \(ADT\)](#)
- [Avian Program](#)
- [California Animal Response Emergency Support \(CARES\)](#)
- [California Avian Health Education Network \(CAHEN\)](#)
- [Cattle Program](#)
- [Emergency Preparedness Response Section \(EPRS\)](#)
- [Equine Medication Monitoring Program \(EMMP\)](#)
- [Equine Program](#)
- [Foreign Animal Disease \(FAD\) Program](#)
- [Secure Food Supply \(SFS\) Program](#)
- [Small Ruminant Program](#)
- [Swine Program](#)
- [Wildlife Interface Program](#)

Mission Statement

The Animal Health Branch is the State's organized, professional veterinary medical unit that protects livestock populations, consumers, and California's economy from catastrophic animal diseases, disasters that impact animals, and other health or agricultural problems. The Branch addresses diseases and other problems that cannot be successfully controlled on an individual animal or herd basis but require state-wide coordinated resources. Implementing programs that protect California's livestock industries and consumers, ensures the availability, affordability, and wholesomeness of food.