

KINNEY COUNTY AG/WILDLIFE NEWSLETTER



QUAIL IN TEXAS

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<http://wildlife.tamu.edu/quail/>

Texas is home to four species of quail, a claim that only three other states can make (Arizona, California, and New Mexico are the others). The Northern Bobwhite Quail is found in all but

the western third of the state, and the scaled or "blue" quail is found in the western half. The Montezuma and Gambel's quail are much less common and are found in only a few areas due to their specific habitat needs.

The bobwhite quail (*Colinus virginianus*) is one of the most easily recognized wildlife species in Texas. The familiar "poor-bob-white" whistle of the male bobwhite can be heard during the spring and summer over most of the state. However, few Texans realize the tremendous impact this species has on our state. Recent data confirm that there are more than 175,000 quail hunters and an additional 400,000 people actually participating in watching, feeding, or photographing quail in Texas each year.

Quail populations have declined across the state over the past few decades. While this is bad news for the quail, and quail enthusiasts, it is part of a larger picture. Quail are the "canary in the coal mine" for a number of other species of Texas wildlife. Species as different as the Texas horned lizard, Eastern Meadowlark, and Northern Shrike have seen very similar population declines during the same period.

<https://agrillifeextension.tamu.edu/solutions/quail-management/>
<http://wildlife.tamu.edu/quail/northern-bobwhites/>



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **TOO HOT FOR ANYTHING BUT CEU's**— August 3— Starts at Noon. Deadline to RSVP is July 28th to 830-563-2442. Chemical Management of Black Brush, Mesquite, an Cenizo, Weed and Pest Control in Wheat and Oat grazing pastures, USDA Private Pesticide Applicator Laws and Regs.
- **HUNTERS ROUNDUP**
Saturday, November 4 from 6 to 10 pm at the Kinney County Civic Center in Brackettville. Ten Gun Raffle, Kawasaki Mule Raffle, Door Prizes, Dinner, Vendors, Exhibits, Entertainment, and much more! See enclosed insert for sponsorship opportunities.

While a host of factors are probably involved, the fundamental reason for quail population decline is loss of habitat. Human development leads to habitat fragmentation, and isolated habitat fragments result in small, isolated quail populations. These small, isolated populations are unable to withstand bad times, and have a greater risk of becoming locally extinct.

Stabilizing quail populations, or reversing the decline, will take a coordinated, long-term effort to conserve Texas grasslands. The general public must be informed about the plight of quail in Texas; private and public landowners must be provided with incentives and information to better manage their properties; and we need to band together in cooperatives and partnerships to manage areas of significant size. Management information is available at the AgriLife Bookstore as well as our Landowner Resources page.

Thanks to the [Reversing the Quail Decline Initiative](#) (RQDI), new research is being conducted to help determine why quail population in Texas are declining and what can be done about it. RQDI is a collaboration between Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department seeks to understand, address, and reverse the critical quail decline in Texas. Since its inception in September, 2013, RQDI has funded 13 projects at several universities in Texas. In addition to research, this effort includes support of programs like Quail Masters, Quail Appreciation Days and youth camps like Bobwhite Brigades.

Additionally, the [Texas Quail Index](#) (TQI), an effort piloted by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. TQI is designed to educate land managers, hunters and the general public about the population dynamics, habitat requirements and other factors affecting bobwhites in Texas. Currently, there are 35 counties and 7 Wildlife Management Areas involved in the project. TQI unites local County Extension Agents (CEA) with land managers and interested community members who work together to implement a variety of quail assessment techniques at a local ranch. Techniques include quail abundance, predator abundance and habitat quality. This type of one-on-one dialogue between local CEAs and community members offers hands-on experience that they can then conduct on their respective properties.
<http://wildlife.tamu.edu/quail/>

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**PEN-RAISED QUAIL**

One way managers have sought to reverse the decline in bobwhite quail is through the introduction of pen-raised quail to their properties. However, pen-raised quails' survival rates are very low. In one study, half of all pen-raised bobwhites died within 10 days after release. The ones that do survive are typically those that join a wild covey.

A "soft release" can be done where the pen-raised birds are kept for a period of time in a pen that allows them to experience their new habitat but protection is provided by the pen from predators. This practice has shown an increase in survival compared to "hard releases".

Habitat management is still the best tool for increasing bobwhite populations on any property.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **BEEF CATTLE SHORT COURSE** —Texas A&M Aug. 7-9 Twenty concurrent sessions for this year's Cattleman's College. Pesticide applicator & Veterinarian CEU's & BQA credits offered. <http://beef-cattleshortcourse.com/>
- **STATEWIDE QUAIL SYMPOSIUM** Aug. 16-18 Abilene — Registration is now open. This event will be at the MCM Elegante Hotel at 4250 Ridgmont Drive. Early registration by Aug. 7- is \$50; \$20 students. Registration at the door is \$75; \$50 students. <https://statewidequailsymposium.com>
- **STATEWIDE TX A&M AGRILIFE SHEEP/GOAT EDUCATION EVENT** August 18-19-San Angelo <http://agrilife.org/westresutls/registration> Expo registration by Aug. 15 is \$40 for adults, \$15 for students.
- **CONSERVATION CLIENT GATEWAY** for Natural Resources Conservation Services—Website for online Access for Farmers and Ranchers. This Gateway enables you to request Federal assistance, sign documents, and to interact with NRCS field staff online. [www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/clientgateway) This service is voluntary and available to agricultural producers. Call for more information to 970-372-4200 or check with your local NRCS field office.



## Texas cattle fever ticks are back with a vengeance.

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COLLEGE STATION— Texas cattle fever ticks, which made Texas longhorns the pariah of the plains in the late 1800s, are once again expanding their range with infestations detected in Live Oak, Willacy and Kleberg counties, said Texas A&M AgriLife experts.

As of Feb. 1, more than 500,000 acres in Texas are under various quarantines outside of the permanent quarantine zone.

Dr. Pete Teel, Texas A&M AgriLife Research entomologist at College Station, said the vigilance and cooperation of regulatory agencies, namely the Texas Animal Health Commission and the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Animal and Plant Health Service, in collaboration with the livestock and wildlife industries are needed to detect, contain and eliminate cattle fever ticks.

Because there is no cure for tick fever, a series of quarantine levels are used to prevent animal movement and the spread of a fever tick infestation, and to permit animal treatments for tick elimination. For an explanation of these quarantines see <http://bit.ly/2jkkTNX>.

“We’ve been responding to calls for several weeks now stemming from this outbreak,” said Dr. Sonja Swiger, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service veterinary entomologist at Stephenville.

“Most of Texas has been shielded from this problem for so long that there is little memory of what it took to be able to enjoy the benefit,” she said. “Now when producers are confronted with the issue without knowledge of the history and biology and risks associated with cattle fever, they are overwhelmed.”

Teel said the historic cattle drives from Texas to railheads in Missouri and Kansas in the late 1800s brought unwanted attention when local cattle died of a strange fever associated with the arrival of Texas cattle.

“Texas cattle fever was ultimately linked to ticks brought along by the Texas longhorns,” Teel said. “These ticks were appropriately named Texas cattle fever ticks, due to their ability to transmit a fever-causing agent from infected to uninfected cattle.”

By 1906, Teel said, it was determined these ticks and Texas cattle fever were found throughout 14 southern states and were limiting the economic development of the region. It was also discovered that procedures separating cattle from these ticks was essential to disease prevention and tick elimination.

State and federal eradication programs with industry support began in 1906 and slowly eradicated the disease by eliminating these specific ticks from the eastern seaboard to the Texas-Mexico border, a task declared

## Upcoming Events

- **TEXAS GRAZING CONFERENCE** Aug. 29-31 Waco, Texas — Tour will be to the Flat Top Ranch and Rocosa Ridge Ranch. Special presenters this year for the morning first morning session: Wyman Meinzer, State Photographer of Texas, “The Legacy of the San Antonio Viejo”—Tim Cansler, “Conservation and the Farm Bill”—Bob Lee, Montana Rancher, “It Takes Ten Dies to Make a Dollar”—Lynn Myers, Nebraska Rancher, “Transitioning the Ranch from One Generation to The Next”, and many more! Registration is \$125 and includes all sessions, a tour, two mixers, and two lunches. [www.regonline.com/txgraz](http://www.regonline.com/txgraz) Hilton registration at <http://mcaf.ee/ymirft>
- **MASTER MARKETER 2017** Can you reduce risk and get more profit from your farm/ranch operation? Register online at <https://agriliferegister.tamu.edu> First 60 applications will be accepted or Sept. 15, 2017 will be the deadline for registering. **\$350** For more information, call Mark Welch at 970-845-8011, email: [jmwelch@tamu.edu](mailto:jmwelch@tamu.edu), or Rob Hogan at 830-278-9151, email: [rhogan@ag.tamu.edu](mailto:rhogan@ag.tamu.edu). Website is: [Mastermarketer.tamu.edu](http://Mastermarketer.tamu.edu)

completed in the 1940s,” he said. “A permanent buffer zone was created and has been maintained ever since along the international border from Del Rio to the mouth of the Rio Grande to prevent re-establishment of ticks from Mexico where both ticks and pathogens remain.”

Since the 1970s, there have been periodic incursions of these ticks into Texas. One such incursion is happening now, requiring quarantine and eradication to prevent their spread, he said.

“However, the success of this program has protected our cattle industry from the risks of disease outbreaks by preventing contact with the tick vector for so long that most people do not remember the tremendous effort and significant benefits, and are often unaware that this risk still exists,” Teel said.

“Decades of changes in land-use, brush encroachment, expansion of native and exotic game, diversification of animal enterprises and variation in climatic cycles are contributing to new challenges in keeping this problem at bay.”

How risky is the disease? Teel said the Southern Region of the U.S. is home to more than 400,000 cattle operations producing a third of all fed cattle in the country. This region is the original distribution location of these ticks before the eradication program, and climate modeling indicates it would still support these ticks today.

Mortality in cattle without prior exposure to the disease is estimated to range from 70-90 percent. There are no protective vaccines and no approved drugs to treat sick animals in the U.S., he said. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has estimated that if eradication of these ticks had not occurred, cattle industry losses across the southern U.S. today would be about \$1 billion annually.



*Cattle tick in hand.  
(TX A&M AgriLife Photo)*

“There are two closely related tick species capable of transmitting these pathogens, one called ‘the cattle tick,’ *Rhipicephalus (Boophilus) annulatus*, and the other called ‘the southern cattle tick,’ *R. microplus*,” she said. “Both of these tick species and associated pathogens were introduced to the Western Hemisphere on livestock brought by early explorers and settlers from different parts of the world.” (Go to: <https://today.agrilife.org/2017/02/02/texas-cattle-fever-ticks-back-vengeance/> to read the rest of this article.)

Teel and Swiger recommend using Tick App, a free smartphone application available at <http://tickapp.tamu.edu>, and the Texas Animal Health Commission’s website at <http://www.tahc.texas.gov/reggs/code.html> for information on tick treatment options, tick quarantine and associated regulations, as well as the latest updates on current quarantines.

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension is an equal opportunity employer and program provider. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.*

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Kinney County Website  
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