

**Animal Health Commission
Summary of Budget Recommendations - House**

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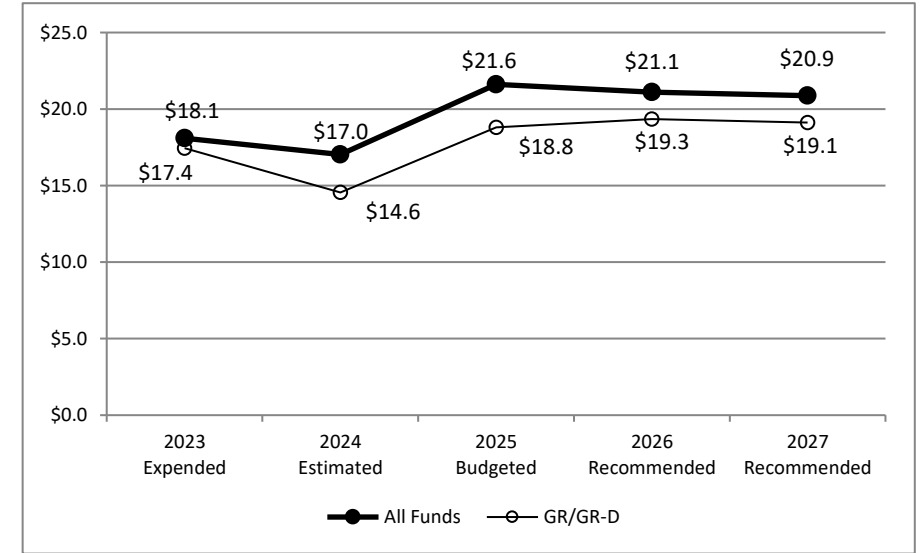
Lewis R. "Bud" Dinges, DVM, Executive Director

James O'Connor, LBB Analyst

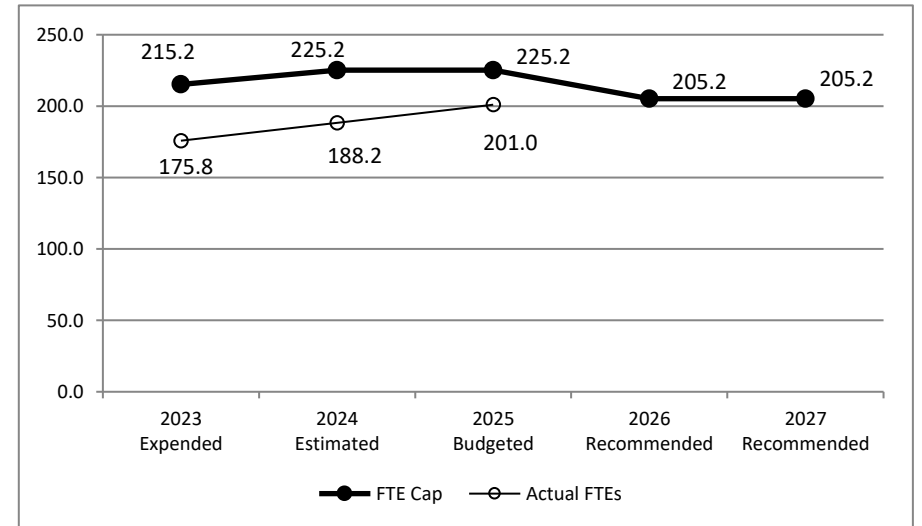
Method of Financing	2024-25 Base	2026-27 Recommended	Biennial Change (\$)	Biennial Change (%)
General Revenue Funds	\$33,354,700	\$38,459,160	\$5,104,460	15.3%
GR Dedicated Funds	\$0	\$0	\$0	0.0%
<i>Total GR-Related Funds</i>	<i>\$33,354,700</i>	<i>\$38,459,160</i>	<i>\$5,104,460</i>	<i>15.3%</i>
Federal Funds	\$5,265,270	\$3,533,444	(\$1,731,826)	(32.9%)
Other	\$22,377	\$0	(\$22,377)	(100.0%)
All Funds	\$38,642,347	\$41,992,604	\$3,350,257	8.7%

	FY 2025 Budgeted	FY 2027 Recommended	Biennial Change	Percent Change
FTEs	201.0	205.2	4.2	2.1%

Historical Funding Levels (Millions)



Historical Full-Time-Equivalent Employees (FTEs)



The bill pattern for this agency (2026-27 Recommended) represents an estimated 100.0% of the agency's estimated total available funds for the 2026-27 biennium.

Animal Health Commission
Summary of Funding Changes and Recommendations - House

Funding Changes and Recommendations for the 2026-27 Biennium compared to the 2024-25 Base Spending Level (in millions)	General Revenue	GR-Dedicated	Federal Funds	Other Funds	All Funds	Strategy in Appendix A
SIGNIFICANT Funding Changes and Recommendations (each issue is explained in Section 3 and additional details are provided in Appendix A):						
A) Net decrease in General Revenue Funds of \$286,000 for the removal of one-time funding for conducting cattle fever tick mitigation clinical trials. Recommendations continue \$30,000 of the \$316,000 appropriated in the 2024-25 biennium.	(\$0.3)	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	(\$0.3)	A.1.2.
B) Increase in General Revenue Funds to create a new Spay and Neuter program at the agency.	\$5.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$5.0	A.1.4.
OTHER Funding Changes and Recommendations (these issues are not addressed in Section 3 but details are provided in Appendix A):						
C) Increase in General Revenue Funds to biennialize the statewide salary adjustments included in the 2024-25 appropriations	\$0.8	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.8	A1.1, A.1.3.
D) Decrease in General Revenue Funds due to removal of one-time vehicle and operating cost funding for entry point inspections.	(\$0.4)	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	(\$0.4)	A.1.1.
E) Decrease in Federal Funds for Plant and Animal Disease, Pest Control, and Animal Care that are not anticipated to be available in the 2026-27 biennium.	\$0.0	\$0.0	(\$1.7)	\$0.0	(\$1.7)	A.1.1.
TOTAL SIGNIFICANT & OTHER Funding Changes and Recommendations (in millions)	\$5.1	\$0.0	(\$1.7)	\$0.0	\$3.4	As Listed
<i>SIGNIFICANT & OTHER Funding Increases</i>	\$5.8	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$0.0	\$5.8	As Listed
<i>SIGNIFICANT & OTHER Funding Decreases</i>	(\$0.7)	\$0.0	(\$1.7)	\$0.0	(\$2.4)	As Listed

NOTE: Totals may not sum due to rounding.

**Animal Health Commission
Selected Fiscal and Policy Issues - House**

1. **Full-Time-Equivalents (FTE) Cap Reduction and Compensation Requests.** Recommendations reduce the agency’s FTE cap from 2024-25 appropriated levels of 225.2 FTEs to 205.2 each fiscal year due to the agency reallocating funding for 20.0 vacant FTEs to other filled positions in its 2026-27 base line request to address compensation issues and turnover.

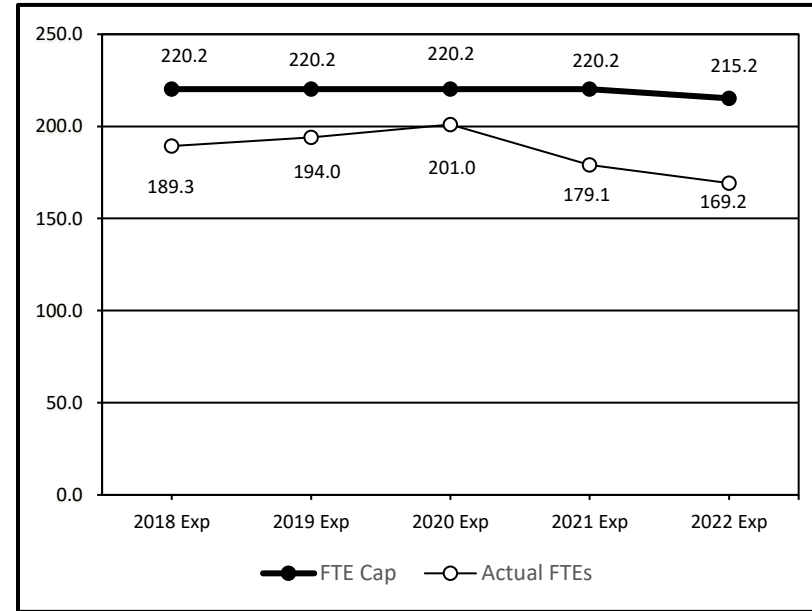
Recommendations also do not include additional General Revenue Funds and 27.0 FTEs to offset vacancies realized in the 2024-25 biennium:

- A) \$0.1 million for targeted salary increases for six filled Veterinarian positions (6.0 FTEs) including one Veterinarian III and five Veterinarian IV positions;
- B) \$5.6 million to fill 27 vacant positions (27.0 FTEs) including: (1) \$4.0 million to provide four Veterinarian IIIs; one Fleet Manager; six Livestock Inspectors, including reclassification of one to a Training and Development Specialist V; one reclassified Business Analyst IV; six Program Specialists; four Customer Service Representatives; one Human Resource Specialist; one Accountant VI; and one Program Specialist IV; (2) \$0.3 million for travel expenses and start up costs for the new FTEs; and (3) \$1.3 million for additional replacement vehicles.

(See also Items Not Included in Recommendations #1 - #2, #4 - #8.)

The agency reports experiencing staff turnover rates of 75.0 percent for field staff positions ranging from 28.0 percent to 57.0 percent for Veterinarian positions since 2019. FTE numbers from 2018 to 2022 are included in the figure to the right (see also, Section 1, “Historical Full-Time-Equivalent Employees (FTEs)”). The State Auditor’s Office reported the following information in its Annual Reports on Classified Employee Turnover for Fiscal Years 2018 through 2023:

Historical Full Time Equivalent Employees (FTEs) 2018-2022



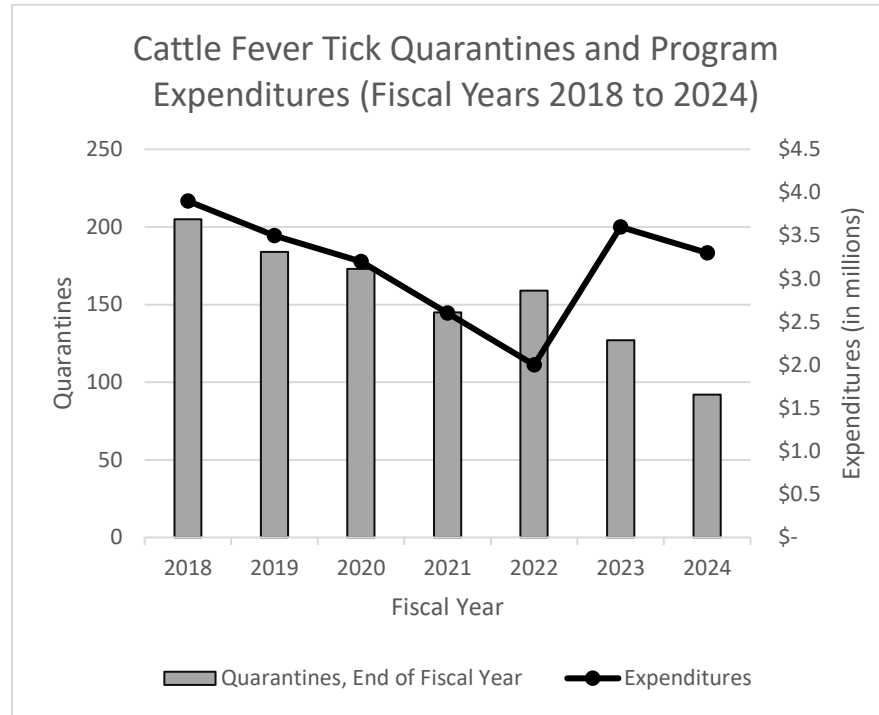
State Auditor's Office Annual Reports on Classified Employee Turnover for Fiscal Years 2018-2023

Fiscal Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Separations						
Involuntary	3	3	5	6	2	10
Voluntary	19	29	21	43	41	21
Retirements	4	9	4	8	5	4
Total	26	41	30	57	48	35
Total Turnover Rate	15.40%	23.10%	15.70%	31.50%	28.20%	19.70%

2. **Cattle Fever Tick Mitigation.** Recommendations provide \$7.3 million in All Funds for fever tick prevention and eradication efforts, which is \$0.4 million below 2024-25 spending levels, in alignment with the agency’s request. The decrease is primarily due to a net reduction in Federal Funds. Cattle fever tick (CFT) prevention and eradication efforts are primarily funded through the agency’s Cattle Health program. According to the agency, fever tick prevention and eradication expenditures are generally sixty to sixty-five percent of all Cattle Health program expenditures, although expenditures can vary based on the status of fever tick outbreaks at given times.

At the end of fiscal year 2024, there were 92 quarantines in six affected counties, down from a peak of 205 in fiscal year 2018 and from 127 quarantines at the end of fiscal year 2023. Once a tick infestation is discovered, it takes a minimum of 15 months for a premise (an area of land directly infested or adjacent to an infestation) to be released from quarantine. The figure charts spending on the CFT program and the number of quarantines at the end of each fiscal year since 2018.

Recommendations include \$30,000 in General Revenue Funds to complete the CFT Mitigation Clinical Trial research which began in the 2024-25 biennium with \$316,000 through the agency’s Diagnostic Administration program (see also, Rider Highlights #9). According to the agency, the original funding was insufficient due to unexpected cost increases and delays in beginning the trials.



3. **Chronic Wasting Disease.** Recommendations provide \$0.9 million in General Revenue Funds for Cervid Health Program activities, which is an All Funds reduction of \$0.1 million. Recommendations include an increase of \$0.4 million in General Revenue Funds offsetting a reduction of \$0.5 million in Federal Funds that are no longer anticipated to be available. According to the agency, a majority of Cervid Health program spending is dedicated to Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD).

CWD is a degenerative neurological disease affecting deer, elk, and other cervids. The disease is similar to bovine spongiform encephalopathy (mad cow disease) in cattle or scrapie in sheep, but is only transmittable to other cervid species. The last positive case detected in Texas was on January 10, 2025, in Brown County. By this date, 797 cervids had tested positive for CWD in Texas. The first captive deer to test positive for CWD in a postmortem test was from a facility in Medina County in June 2015. This positive test led the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) and TPWD to develop a revision of deer breeder permitting rules and movement restrictions that took effect in August 2016. Further new regulations were passed in November 2021 requiring antemortem testing of deer for CWD prior to liberation from deer breeder facilities, which resulted in detection in five different facilities where CWD had been previously undetected.

Native deer species (white-tailed deer and mule deer) are defined in the Texas Parks and Wildlife Code, Section 63.001, as game animals and not livestock. As such, they are owned by the state and are under the jurisdiction of TPWD. The Texas Agriculture Code, Section 161.041 authorizes TAHC to act to eradicate or control any disease affecting exotic livestock, including situations when the transmitting agent is an animal species that is not within the agency’s jurisdiction. The voluntary CWD Herd Certification Program (HCP) is a cooperative effort between the TAHC, the United States Department of Agriculture-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA), and farmed cervid producers. The TAHC coordinates the Texas program and encourages cervid producers to certify their herds and comply with the CWD HCP Standards. The goal of the HCP is to provide a consistent, national approach to control the incidence of CWD in farmed cervids and prevent the interstate spread of CWD. National CWD HCP requirements for all enrolled herd owners include fencing, individual animal ID’s, regular inventories, testing of all animals over twelve months that die for any reason, reporting of cervids older than 12 months that escape or disappear, and the introduction of new animals solely (if at all) from other herds enrolled in the CWD HCP. (See Items Not Included in Recommendations #9).

4. **Laboratory Testing.** Recommendations continue 2024-25 biennial spending levels of \$1.0 million in General Revenue funds for laboratory testing services through a required memorandum of understanding (MOU) agreement with the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL).

TVMDL is designated as the state's regulatory animal health laboratory to test for diseases affecting the livestock industry, including cattle, swine, horses, sheep, and goats. The MOU with TVMDL must be reviewed each fiscal year, and it clarifies the scope of sample testing, logistics, and data sharing. TVMDL performs diagnostic and laboratory testing services for TAHC, and TAHC reimburses TVMDL for the associated costs.

In addition to testing fees, TAHC also pays an accession fee for laboratory samples. In fiscal year 2022, the accession fee was \$7.00; this increased to \$8.00 in fiscal year 2023, where the fee remains as of the fiscal year 2024 MOU.

Recommendations continue Rider 2, Laboratory Testing, which requires TAHC to annually report the contract amount agreed to in the interagency MOU with TVMDL, and annually report the billing costs for testing. The rider also continues contingency appropriation authority that would provide additional General Revenue Funds to pay for increased testing costs in the event of a disease outbreak where testing costs would exceed 10.0 percent of the costs identified in the MOU between TAHC and TVMDL each fiscal year.

5. **Appropriations Contingent on Revenue Collections.** Recommendations continue Rider 6, Contingency Appropriation: Cost Recovery for Animal Health Programs, which includes \$0.7 million each fiscal year in General Revenue Funds in fee generated revenue collections to recover costs associated with the issuance of health certificates, Chronic Wasting Disease inspections, and fowl registrations. This establishes the revenue target each fiscal year at an amount that is anticipated by the agency to be collected in the 2026-27 biennium. The rider also provides increased appropriation authority for revenues generated above the Comptroller's Biennial Revenue Estimate and authority for the Legislative Budget Board to direct the Comptroller of Public Accounts to reduce the appropriation authority in the event that revenues are insufficient to offset the amounts identified in the rider.

6. **Spay and Neuter Pilot Program.** Recommendations include \$5.0 million in General Revenue Funds in Strategy A.1.4, Animal Emergency Management, to create a new Spay and Neuter program. Requirements for the program are included in the agency's bill pattern in Rider 10, Spay and Neuter Pilot Program - Focus on Animal Health. The purpose of the program is to enhance efforts in disease prevention, health assessment, and humane treatment of cats and dogs at risk for unplanned breeding via spay and neuter procedures. The rider authorizes TAHC to outsource sterilization efforts to entities that have a long-standing history of providing cost effective large-scale spay and neuter services and demonstrate proven experience in successfully managing high-quality, high volume spay and neuter services. Licensed veterinarians may use nonsurgical techniques and technologies that have received approval from the United States Food and Drug Administration or the United States Department of Agriculture to sterilize dogs and cats humanely and permanently in compliance with Section 828.0045 of the Health and Safety Code. The rider requires outsourcing entities to report on the number of procedures completed per quarter to TAHC, and TAHC is required to report at the start of each fiscal year on the number of animals treated and their location, health outcomes including disease prevention and control efforts, an outline of the expenditure of allocated funds, and strategies for program expansion and improvement annually. Recommendations do not include an additional \$1.3 million in General Revenue Funds with 7.0 FTEs requested by the agency to initiate the program. (See also Rider Highlights, New Riders #10, and Items Not Included in Recommendations #10.)

Recommendations for the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) also include \$8.0 million in General Revenue Funds. The DSHS bill pattern includes Rider 32, Spay and Neuter Pilot Program – Public Health Focus, with directives for the program to protect human health by reducing the population of cats and dogs at risk for unplanned breeding that may carry infectious diseases.

**Animal Health Commission
Rider Highlights - House**

Modification of Existing Riders

The following riders include recommendations to remove obsolete language, make conforming changes such as updating fiscal years and amounts to reflect funding recommendations:

Rider 2, Laboratory Testing

Rider 3, Unexpended Balances Within the Biennium

Rider 4, Testing and Immunization of Employees

Rider 5, Allowance for Personally-Owned Horses

Rider 6, Contingency Appropriation: Cost Recovery for Animal Health Programs.

8. **Agricultural and Livestock Entry Point Inspection Stations.** Recommendations modify the rider to require the agency to assist the Department of Agriculture as needed in operating regional agricultural and livestock entry point inspection stations and conducting TAHC livestock inspections at these stations out of agency appropriations.
9. **Cattle Fever Tick Mitigation Clinical Trials.** Recommendations modify the rider to require the agency to use \$30,000 in General Revenue Funds in Strategy A.1.2, Diagnostic and Epidemiological Support Services, to complete the cattle fever tick mitigation trials begun in the 2024-25 biennium; to delete language requiring the agency to use specified appropriations to evaluate dosing and withdrawal efforts in phase one; and to delete language requiring the agency to transfer a required amount through an interagency contract to assist in conducting phase two evaluations. According to the agency, the first two phases of the trials are expected to be completed by the end of fiscal year 2025. (See also Select Fiscal and Policy Issues #2.)

New Riders

10. **Spay and Neuter Program - Focus on Animal Health.** Recommendations add of a new rider that requires the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) to use \$5.0 million in General Revenue from Strategy A.1.4, Animal Emergency Management, to create a new spay and neutering program for cats and dogs, including authority to oversee spay and neuter procedures and outsource spaying and neutering to qualified entities. Outsourcing entities would be required to report quarterly to the TAHC on the number of procedures completed. The rider would allow licensed veterinarians to utilize nonsurgical spay and neuter procedures in compliance with Section 828.0045 of the Health and Safety Code.

The rider would also require TAHC to report annually at the start of each fiscal year on the number of animals treated and their location, health outcomes including disease prevention and control efforts, an outline of the expenditure of allocated funds, and strategies for program expansion and improvement. (See also Select Fiscal and Policy Issues #6.)

Deleted Riders

2. Recommendations delete Rider 2, Capital Budget. No capital projects above \$0.5 million are recommended for the 2026-27 biennium.

**Animal Health Commission
Items Not Included in Recommendations - House**

		2026-27 Biennial Total			Information Technology Involved?	Contracting Involved?	Estimated Continued Cost 2028-29
		GR & GR-D	All Funds	FTEs			
Agency Exceptional Items Not Included (in agency priority order)							
1)	Veterinarian Additional Salary and Equity Adjustment: General Revenue Funds to: (1) increase salaries of six filled veterinarian positions including one Veterinarian III and five Veterinarian IV positions (\$144,550), and (2) fund four Veterinarian IV (4.0 FTEs) positions (\$960,000). The remaining funding is for travel expenses (\$40,000) and start up costs for the new FTEs (\$22,000). (See also, Selected Fiscal and Policy Issue #1)	\$1,166,550	\$1,166,550	4.0	No	No	\$1,144,550
2)	Fleet Safety and Improvements: General Revenue Funds to provide: (1) \$1,290,000 with capital budget authority to purchase 34 fleet vehicles and (2) \$110,000 to fund one fleet manager position (1.0 FTE), to assist the current fleet manager in overseeing the agency's fleet. The remaining funding is for start up costs for the new FTE (\$6,500). (See also, Selected Fiscal and Policy Issue #1)	\$1,406,500	\$1,406,500	1.0	No	No	\$110,000
3)	Ectoparasite Field Identification Laboratory: General Revenue Funds and 2.0 FTEs to establish an ectoparasite field identification laboratory to recruit an entomologist (\$141,324) and an administrative assistant (\$87,828) and to procure equipment to increase foreign pest surveillance in Texas. The remaining funding is for travel expenses (\$20,000) and start up costs for new FTEs (\$23,400).	\$272,552	\$272,552	2.0	No	No	\$251,552
4)	Critical Field Staff Positions: General Revenue Funds to provide: (1) \$687,282 to provide six vacant Livestock Inspector positions (6.0 FTEs), and (2) \$96,000 to reclassify an existing Livestock Inspector position to a Training and Development Specialist V. (See also, Selected Fiscal and Policy Issue #1)	\$783,282	\$783,282	6.0	No	No	\$750,282
5)	IT Infrastructure Improvements and Additional Funding for Business Analyst Position: General Revenue Funds to provide: (1) \$134,300 for IT infrastructure improvements to replace switches, servers, and all wireless access points within agency offices, and (2) \$226,600 for a Business Analyst IV position (1.0 FTE) to perform agency specific tasks related to IT software and hardware systems. The remaining funding is for start up costs for the new FTE (\$6,500). (See also, Selected Fiscal and Policy Issue #1)	\$367,400	\$367,400	1.0	Yes	No	\$233,200

**Animal Health Commission
Items Not Included in Recommendations - House**

		2026-27 Biennial Total			Information Technology Involved?	Contracting Involved?	Estimated Continued Cost 2028-29
		GR & GR-D	All Funds	FTEs			
6)	Program Records and Epidemiology Data and Reporting Enhancements: General Revenue Funds to provide: (1) six Program Specialist (6.0 FTEs) positions (\$753,816), and (2) four customer service representative (4.0 FTEs) positions (\$364,088). These include one Program Specialist and four Customer Service Representatives for the Program Records Department, and five Program Specialists for the Epidemiology Department. The remaining funding is for travel expenses (\$20,000) and start up costs for new FTEs (\$117,000). (See also, Selected Fiscal and Policy Issue #1)	\$1,254,904	\$1,254,904	10.0	No	No	\$1,149,904
7)	Critical Central Administration Positions: General Revenue Funds to provide two positions within the Human Resources (HR) Department and Financial Services Department, including one HR specialist (1.0 FTEs) and one Accountant VI (1.0 FTE) to serve as an accounting team lead. (See also, Selected Fiscal and Policy Issue #1)	\$323,000	\$323,000	2.0	No	No	\$310,000
8)	Secure Food Supply Program Enhancement: General Revenue Funds to provide three Program Specialist IV (3.0 FTE) positions (\$390,000) to develop Secure Food Supply plans for livestock producers in Texas. The remaining funding is for travel expenses (\$39,000) and start up costs for new FTEs (\$21,300). (See also, Selected Fiscal and Policy Issue #1)	\$450,300	\$450,300	3.0	No	No	\$432,600
9)	Cervid Health Program Support: General Revenue Funds and FTEs to support the Chronic Wasting Disease Herd Certification Program. FTEs include 1.0 Veterinarian III (\$249,212), 1.0 Program Specialist IV (\$132,510), 6.0 Program Specialist III's (\$745,632), 3.0 Investigator IV's (\$349,728), 1.0 Customer Service Rep IV (\$107,446), 3.0 Inspector IV's (\$322, 338), 1.0 Epidemiologist IV (\$183,672), 2.0 Attorney III's (\$411,920), 1.0 System Administrator III (\$141,324), and 1.0 Accountant V (\$150,752). Request also includes 7 vehicles (\$455,000) for new FTEs. The remaining funding is for travel expenses (\$177,000) and start up costs for new FTEs (\$269,600). (See also Selected Fiscal and Policy Issue #3.)	\$3,696,134	\$3,696,134	20.0	No	No	\$3,031,134

**Animal Health Commission
Items Not Included in Recommendations - House**

		2026-27 Biennial Total			Information Technology Involved?	Contracting Involved?	Estimated Continued Cost 2028-29
		GR & GR-D	All Funds	FTEs			
10)	Spay and Neuter Pilot Program: General Revenue Funds and FTEs to support the introduction of the new Spay and Neuter Program. FTEs include 1.0 Veterinarian III (\$249,212), 2.0 Program Specialist IV's (\$265,020), 1.0 Attorney III (\$205,960), 1.0 Grant Specialist IV (\$160,842), 1.0 Contract Specialist IV (\$150,752), and 1.0 System Administrator III (\$141,324). The remaining funding is for travel expenses (\$31,000) and start up costs for new FTEs (\$95,500). (See also Selected Fiscal and Policy Issue #6.)	\$1,299,610	\$1,299,610	7.0	No	No	\$1,226,110
TOTAL Items Not Included in Recommendations		\$11,020,232	\$11,020,232	56.0			\$8,639,332

**Animal Health Commission
Appendices - House**

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* Appendix is not included - no significant information to report

**Animal Health Commission
Funding Changes and Recommendations by Strategy - House -- ALL FUNDS**

Strategy/Goal	2024-25 Base	2026-27 Recommended	Biennial Change	% Change	Comments
FIELD OPERATIONS A.1.1	\$27,566,217	\$26,146,093	(\$1,420,124)	(5.2%)	• Recommendations include a decrease of \$1.4 million in All Funds resulting from: a) an increase in \$0.8 million in General Revenue Funds to biennialize the statewide salary adjustments included in the 2024-25 appropriations. b) a decrease of \$0.4 million in General Revenue Funds due to the removal of one-time costs for motor vehicles, staffing, and operating costs for entry point inspections. c) a decrease of \$1.7 million in Federal Funds from the Plant and Animal Disease Test Control Grant.
DIAGNOSTIC/EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SUPPORT A.1.2	\$1,329,771	\$1,043,771	(\$286,000)	(21.5%)	• Recommendations include a net decrease of \$0.3 million in General Revenue Funds for one-time Cattle Fever Tick Mitigation Clinical Trial costs. (See also, Selected Fiscal and Policy Issues #2)
PROMOTE COMPLIANCE A.1.3	\$2,114,441	\$2,170,822	\$56,381	2.7%	• Recommendations include an increase of \$56,381 in General Revenue Funds to biennialize the statewide salary adjustments included in the 2024-25 appropriations.
ANIMAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT A.1.4	\$597,308	\$5,597,308	\$5,000,000	837.1%	• Recommendations include an increase of \$5.0 million in General Revenue Funds for the creation of a new Spay and Neutering Program.
Total, Goal A, PROTECT/ENHANCE TEXAS ANIMAL HEALTH	\$31,607,737	\$34,957,994	\$3,350,257	10.6%	
CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION B.1.1	\$3,818,256	\$3,818,256	\$0	0.0%	
INFORMATION RESOURCES B.1.2	\$2,475,128	\$2,475,128	\$0	0.0%	
OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES B.1.3	\$741,226	\$741,226	\$0	0.0%	
Total, Goal B, INDIRECT ADMINISTRATION	\$7,034,610	\$7,034,610	\$0	0.0%	
Grand Total, All Strategies	\$38,642,347	\$41,992,604	\$3,350,257	8.7%	

**Animal Health Commission
FTE Highlights - Senate**

Full-Time-Equivalent Positions	Expended 2023	Estimated 2024	Budgeted 2025	Recommended 2026	Recommended 2027
Cap	215.2	225.2	225.2	205.2	205.2
Actual/Budgeted	175.8	188.2	201.0	NA	NA

Schedule of Exempt Positions (Cap)					
Executive Director, Group 6	\$155,814	\$187,811	\$194,807	\$194,807	\$194,807

Notes:

a) Recommendations decrease the 2026-27 FTE cap by 20.0 FTEs each fiscal year below the 2024-25 FTE cap due to the agency's baseline appropriations request reallocating funding for 20.0 vacant FTEs to other filled positions to address staff turnover realized in the 2024-25 biennium. (See also Selected Fiscal and Policy Issues #1 and Items Not Included in Recommendations #1 - #2 and #4 - #8).

b) Fiscal years 2023 and 2024 reflect FTEs below the cap due to staff vacancies and turnover.