



2018 Texas Oral Rabies Vaccine Distribution Update

1/10/2018: Personnel from Texas Wildlife Services, Texas Military Department, Dynamic Aviation, USDA National Rabies Management Program, and Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) arrived in Zapata yesterday, and the Command Trailer was set up. Personnel participated in orientation and safety training for the 24th annual Texas oral rabies vaccination program (ORVP) this morning. USDA Wildlife Services personnel received 46,500 oral rabies vaccine baits for helicopter distribution in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (Cameron, Hidalgo, and Willacy counties). Ms. Joyce Currington from the Zapata County News visited the site for an update on the 2018 ORVP. The afternoon was hot and windy, and all four planes began their first flights by 1:30 pm. The four planes were each able to complete 2 flights before sunset which enabled all of the flying personnel to go up once. A total of 49,778 of the 314,700 oral rabies vaccine baits being distributed by airplane in the Zapata-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone were distributed.

1/11/2018: The day began with mechanical issues on 3 planes and ground fog in the northern portion of the assigned lines in the first round of flights. The mechanical issue for one plane was resolved within an hour. The other two planes were repaired before the end of the day, however strong, gusty winds associated with an incoming cold front prevented take-offs after 2 pm. Two planes flew 2 rounds each. A total of 98,828 of the 314,700 oral rabies vaccine baits being distributed by airplane in the Zapata-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone have been distributed.

Dr. Ronald Tyler, DSHS Public Health Region (PHR) 11 Zoonosis Control (ZC) veterinarian, and Angel Guevara, PHR 11 ZC Specialist, conducted ORV handbaiting safety and continuing education (CE) training for 38 Animal Control Officers and Registered Sanitarians from Alice Animal Control, Jim Hogg County Animal Control, the City of Laredo Animal Control, Mission Animal Control, Nueces County Animal Control, the City of Rio Bravo, Rio Grande City Animal Control, the City of Roma, and Zapata City/County Environmental Health. ORV baits for ground distribution by jurisdictions in PHR 11 were also allocated today. Dr. Tyler earned veterinary CE credit for his visit to the site and participation in the program.

Reporter Carlos Diaz Warns from Fox 39 and Univision Laredo KLDO 27 visited the site to learn about the ORVP.

1/12/2018: Clear skies, cooler temperatures, and light winds allowed early takeoffs, with all 4 planes ready to drop rabies vaccine baits on their lines at sunrise. The 4 planes were able to completed 3 rounds each, finishing by sunset. A total of 64,200 of the 314,700 oral rabies vaccine baits being distributed by airplane in the Zapata-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone remain to be distributed.

Reporter Jose Sanchez from KENS-TV (San Antonio and Weslaco) visited the site to learn about the ORVP.

1/13/2018: Another morning with clear skies allowed the planes to be up and distributing baits before 8 am. Two planes had only one flight each, and they were cleaned up before loading with Dynamic Aviation personnel and luggage and heading to Del Rio before noon. The other two planes had an additional flight each and headed to Del Rio with their Texas State Guard crew on board once they completed their baiting. The remaining personnel, trailers and equipment travelled to Del Rio once the planes departed, and everyone arrived safely.

A total of 309,300 oral rabies vaccine baits were distributed by airplane in the Zapata-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone; the amount was lower than initially projected, perhaps due to increased development which did not allow distribution by airplane.

1/14/2018: The day began with clear skies, temperatures in the 30's, and personnel acclimating to the new airport routine. All 4 planes were able to complete 3 rounds of 2.3-3.1 hour flights. A total of 124,350 of the 450,000 oral rabies vaccine baits available for the Del Rio-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone were distributed.

1/15/2018: Temperatures were slightly warmer than yesterday morning, and all 4 planes were in the air by 7:40 am to begin baiting shortly after sunrise. Lingering ground fog in the Terrell County area during the 1st round of flights prevented vaccine bait distribution along several lines, but the fog had cleared by the 2nd round of flights. All 4 planes were able to complete 3 rounds of 2.7-3.1 hour flights. A total of 257,700 of the 450,000 oral rabies vaccine baits available for the Del Rio-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone have been distributed.

Contingency plans are in place to evaluate weather conditions early tomorrow morning to see if the incoming cold front will affect flight schedules.

1/16/2018: Initial flights were delayed until after 10 am due to freezing temperatures and the potential for sleet and snow. The 4 planes and their chilly crews completed 2 rounds of flights under overcast skies. Representatives from the Laughlin AFB Airspace Management Office visited the site for an overview of the program and to discuss coordination of ORVP flight operations. A total of 357,325 of the 450,000 oral rabies vaccine baits available for the Del Rio-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone have been distributed.

1/17/2018: It was another cold, overcast morning in Del Rio but planes and crews were in the air before 8:00 am to begin the remaining 7 flights for this portion of the zone. All planes had completed their vaccine bait distribution by 2:00 pm.

Dr. Stephen Sells, a veterinarian based in Bandera, Texas, visited the site to learn about the ORVP and earn veterinary CE.

A total of 439,500 oral rabies vaccine baits were distributed in the Del Rio-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone.

Personnel, planes, trailers, and equipment will move to Alpine early Thursday morning for the final phase of the 2018 Border Maintenance Zone.

1/18/2018: Everyone arrived safely and promptly in Alpine, and planes were loaded with fuel, baits, and personnel for take-offs starting around 11:30 am. The 4 planes completed 2 rounds of flights under the sunny blue skies of West Texas. A total of 76,425 of the remaining 213,300 oral rabies vaccine baits available for delivery by fixed-wing aircraft in the Border Maintenance Zone were distributed.

1/19/2018: Planes left the field before daybreak so that they could be on their lines and baiting in the Big Bend area by sunrise. One full round and 2 flights were scheduled for today to complete the Alpine-based grids outside of the military training routes used by Dyess Air Force Base. Barring any mechanical issues, the remaining areas will be completed with 2 full rounds of flights on Saturday.

Dr. Mary Dodson, owner of the Alpine Small Animal Practice, visited the site to learn about the ORVP and earn veterinary CE.

Reporter Carlos Morales with Marfa Public Radio visited the site to learn about the ORVP.

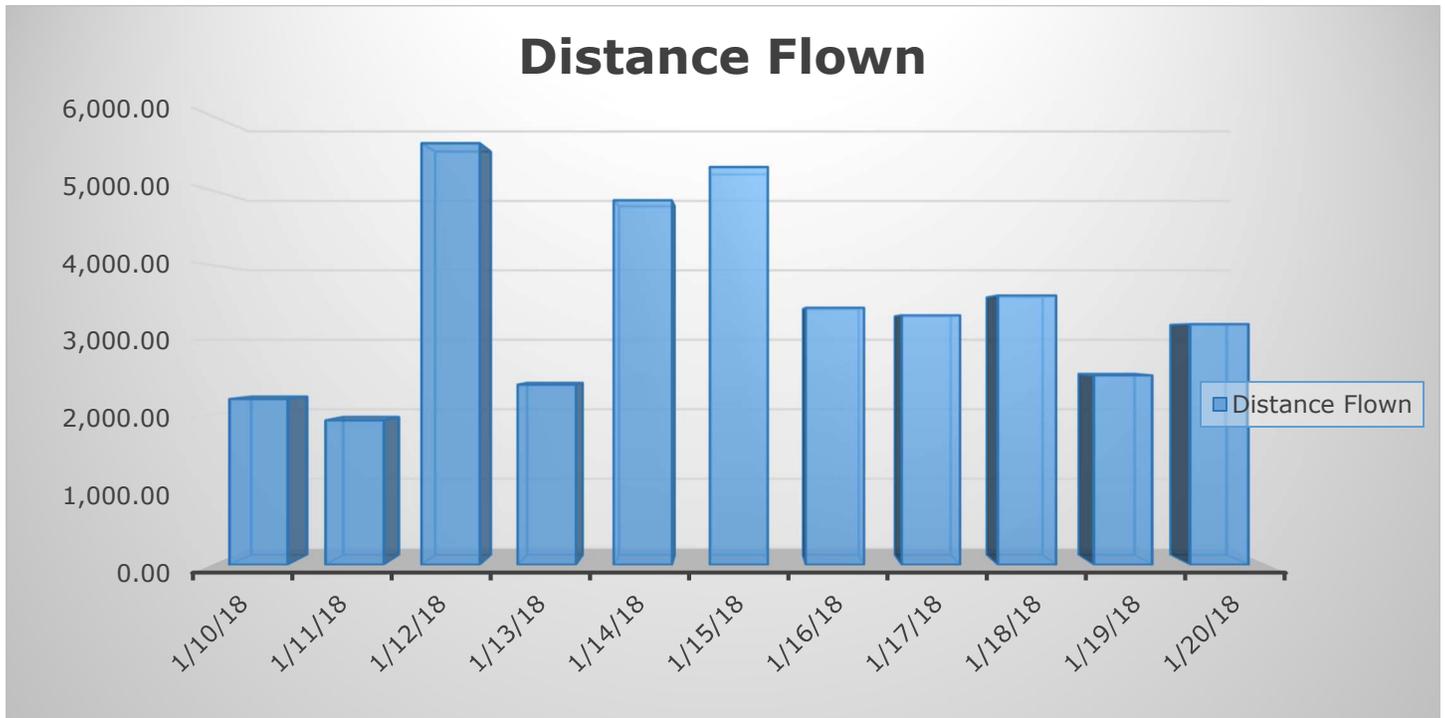
A total of 135,000 of the remaining 213,300 oral rabies vaccine baits available for delivery by fixed-wing aircraft in the Border Maintenance Zone have been distributed.

1/20/2018: Contingency plans for continued operation of the ORVP were implemented this morning due to the federal government shutdown. Our federal partners with the USDA National Rabies Management Program and Wildlife Services returned to their headquarters with their equipment, which included the Command Center trailer. Fortunately, the Texas ORVP is a State-directed program and staffed primarily by State employees with DSHS, Texas Wildlife Services, and the Texas State Guard (TXSG). The aviation services contractor and fueling are also funded through DSHS, so we were able to complete the remaining two rounds of flights. We were also fortunate to be able to use the Alpine-Casparis Municipal Airport office as our Command Center. Everyone pitched in to help fill in any gaps, and Captain Stephen Walker of the TXSG flew back-to-back flights to replace the one missing crew member.

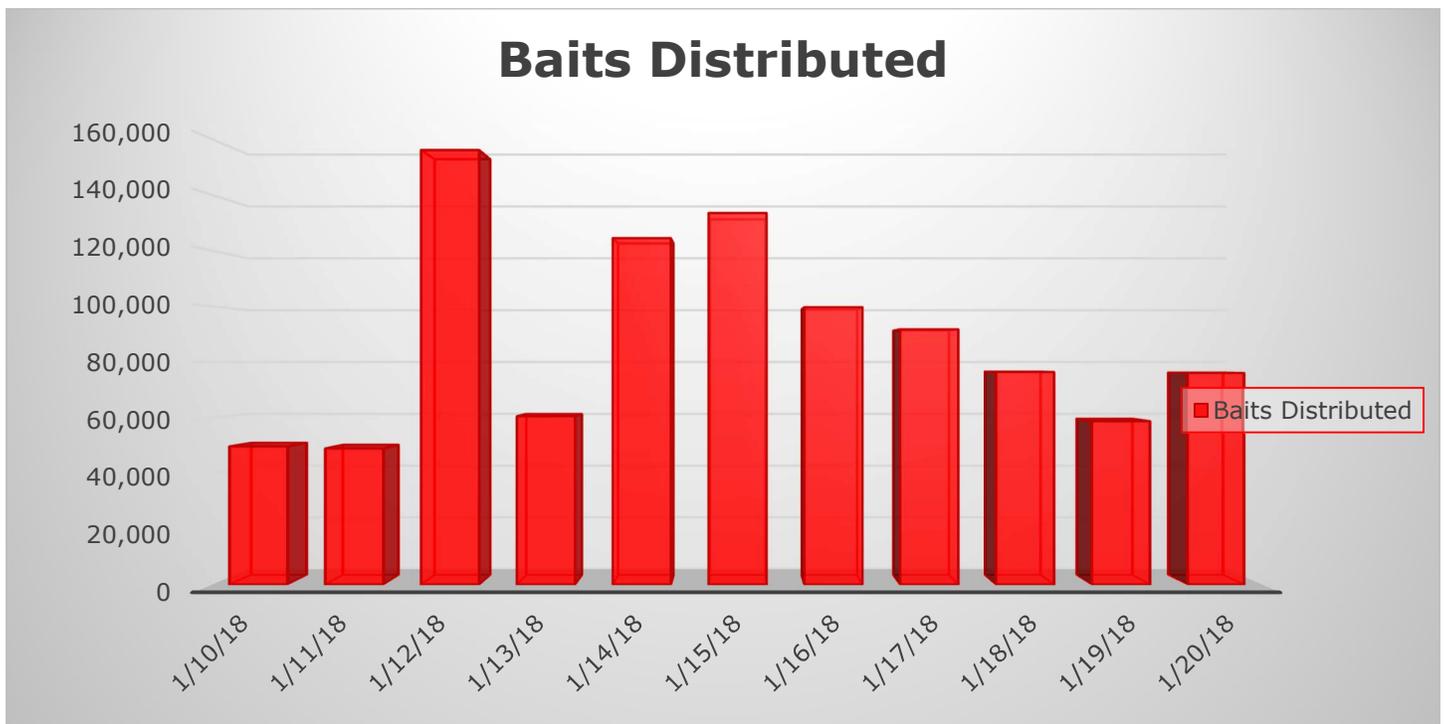
All 4 planes were up by 7:30 am so that they could be on their lines by daybreak, and the last ORV bait distribution flight returned at 1:53 pm, completing the Texas ORVP for another year. A total of 962,100 rabies vaccine baits were distributed by fixed-wing aircraft, 46,500 rabies vaccine baits were distributed by helicopter, and 26,100 rabies vaccine baits will be distributed from the ground in the 2018 Border Maintenance Zone.

Many thanks to all of the participants for their perseverance and good spirits. Safe travels home!

Distance Flown By Day



Baits Distributed By Day



Daily Map

