



2021 Texas Oral Rabies Vaccine Distribution Update

1/18/2021: Personnel from Texas Wildlife Services (TWS), Texas Military Department, Dynamic Aviation, the USDA National Rabies Management Program (NRMP), and Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) arrived in Zapata yesterday. After attending virtual orientation training on January 12, personnel received their in-person orientation and safety training for the 27th annual Texas oral rabies vaccination program (ORVP) prior to their scheduled flights today. Heavy fog blanketed Zapata until around 10 am, delaying the 9 am scheduled departures and limiting us to two rounds of flights. All four planes began their first flights shortly after 10 am and were each able to complete 2 flights by early afternoon, allowing all of the flying personnel to go up once. An estimated 83,175 of the 367,800 oral rabies vaccine baits being distributed by airplane in the Zapata-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone were distributed.

1/19/2021: No fog this morning, so planes were up before 8 am. Cloudy skies kept temperatures relatively cool, and all four planes completed three rounds of flights. Although there were some delays during the turnarounds, planes completed their scheduled flights before the rain began. Dr. Ronald Tyler, DSHS Public Health Region (PHR) 11 Zoonosis Control (ZC) veterinarian, picked up 24,000 oral rabies vaccine baits for ground distribution by jurisdictions in PHR 11. A total of 238,200 of the 367,800 oral rabies vaccine baits being distributed by airplane in the Zapata-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone have been distributed.

1/20/2021: Rain and low cloud ceilings prevented flights today. ORVP crews and aircraft personnel were prepared if the weather improved, but conditions remained poor. No oral rabies vaccine baits were distributed.

1/21/2021: Another foggy, misty morning gave way to low cloud ceilings, preventing flights throughout most of the day. ORVP Command and aircraft personnel reported to the airport early in the morning to be prepared if the weather improved. First and second round crews remained on standby throughout the morning and early afternoon based on the promise of improving conditions. Conditions slowly improved after 2 pm, and all four planes were able to initiate flights. Unfortunately, dropping cloud ceilings in the vicinity of extremely tall wind generators (a windmill farm) resulted in one plane returning to base shortly after takeoff. A total of 279,075 of the 367,800 oral rabies vaccine baits being distributed by airplane in the Zapata-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone have been distributed. We have another day of flights left in Zapata and hope for better weather tomorrow.

1/22/2021: Zapata and the Lower Rio Grande Valley were once again shrouded in fog in the early morning hours, preventing an early start. Fortunately, the sun and rising temperatures did their work eliminating the fog earlier than predicted, and the first plane was able to go up shortly after 10 am. All four planes were up by 11 am, and the

last seven flights for the Zapata-based portion were completed by 4:30 pm. All of the 367,800 oral rabies vaccine baits being distributed by airplane in the Zapata-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone have been distributed.

The 46,500 oral rabies vaccine baits that will be distributed by helicopter in parts of Cameron, Hidalgo, Kenedy, and Willacy counties will be picked up from the Zapata County Airport by Texas Wildlife Services personnel at a later date.

Planes, personnel, and equipment will travel to Del Rio tomorrow with hopes for better weather.

1/23/2021: Saturday was a travel day for personnel, planes, trailers, and equipment. ORVP personnel left Zapata in fog and mist and arrived in Del Rio under heavily overcast skies. All arrived safely, and personnel inventoried the ORV bait delivery and set up flights and schedules for Sunday. Sunday's weather is forecast to be foggy and overcast through most of the day.

1/24/2021: ORVP personnel had a leisurely morning since the weather was foggy and overcast as predicted. Dynamic Aviation personnel prepared the aircraft in case the weather improved enough to allow one round of flights. ORVP flight planners evaluated different scenarios and prepared flight schedules to incorporate a high-priority area if weather allowed. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate. The forecast for tomorrow is much better.

1/25/2021: The ORVP team was excited to wake to clear skies, and all four planes were up shortly after sunrise to begin a full day of flights. Crews and planes completed three rounds of flights that averaged around 3 hours in length. A total of 171,600 of the 366,600 oral rabies vaccine baits being distributed by airplane in the Del Rio-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone were distributed.

David Treviño from the TWS Corpus Christi District Office picked up 46,500 oral rabies vaccine (ORV) baits from the Zapata County Airport that will be distributed by helicopter in parts of Cameron, Hidalgo, Kenedy, and Willacy counties.

1/26/2021: ORVP personnel prepared for the first flights of the day in chilly 45°F temperatures, launching before 8 am. The temperatures rose under sunny skies, reaching near 80°F by late afternoon despite the strong breeze. Crews and planes completed three rounds of flights, for a total of 12 flights today. A total of 325,200 of the 366,600 oral rabies vaccine baits being distributed by airplane in the Del Rio-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone have been distributed.

1/27/2021: All four planes and crews were ready to launch shortly after sunrise for the final four flights out of Del Rio. Unfortunately, mechanical issues were identified in one plane prior to takeoff, and it returned for assessment and troubleshooting by the aircraft mechanics. That plane remained on the ground, and the assigned crew was released for the day. The 2nd round crew, comprised of Texas State Guard personnel, for one of the other planes was called in on short notice, and they went up shortly before 10 am to complete the last flight by noon. All planes and crews had to maneuver around an exclusion area set up around the Laughlin AFB restricted airspace since we were unable to distribute vaccine baits over that area on Sunday due to the weather. Because the approximately 121 mi² exclusion area was not baited and there was additional off-time over the city of Del Rio and the Amistad Reservoir, a total of 356,100 oral rabies vaccine

baits were distributed in the Del Rio-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone. The remaining 10,500 oral rabies vaccine baits will be transferred and distributed in the Alpine-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone.

Thursday will be a travel day for personnel, planes, trailers, and equipment.

1/28/2021: All personnel, planes, trailers, and equipment arrived safely in Alpine. DSHS and Texas State Guard personnel inventoried the ORV bait delivery. Instructions and schedules for Friday's flights were shared with personnel.

1/29/2021: Chilly temperatures and a bright, full moon greeted ORVP personnel as they reported to the Alpine-Casparis Municipal Airport for the first flights of the day. All planes were up shortly before 8 am to begin a full day of flights. Planes and crews completed three rounds of flights ranging in duration from 2.4 hours to 3.0 hours, landing by 5 pm. Approximately 133,050 of the 380,700 ORV baits (which includes the additional 10,500 oral rabies vaccine baits transferred from Del Rio) for the Alpine-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone were distributed.

Dr. Ken Waldrup, DSHS PHR 9/10 ZC veterinarian, visited the site and picked up 2,100 ORV baits for ground-based distribution in El Paso County later this week.

The 46,500 oral rabies vaccine baits for South Texas were distributed by helicopter by Texas Wildlife Services personnel in portions of Cameron, Hidalgo, Kenedy, and Willacy counties which are within the Border Maintenance Zone.

1/30/2021: The planes were loaded and in the air by sunrise to begin the ferry to their assigned grids and lines for the day. Today was a cool, blustery day with winds howling around the Command Trailers in Alpine. Fortunately, the winds were not as strong in the baiting zone, and flights were not as bumpy as anticipated. All four planes completed their three rounds of flights well before sunset. A total of 287,400 of the 380,700 oral rabies vaccine baits being distributed by airplane in the Alpine-based portion of the Border Maintenance Zone have been distributed.

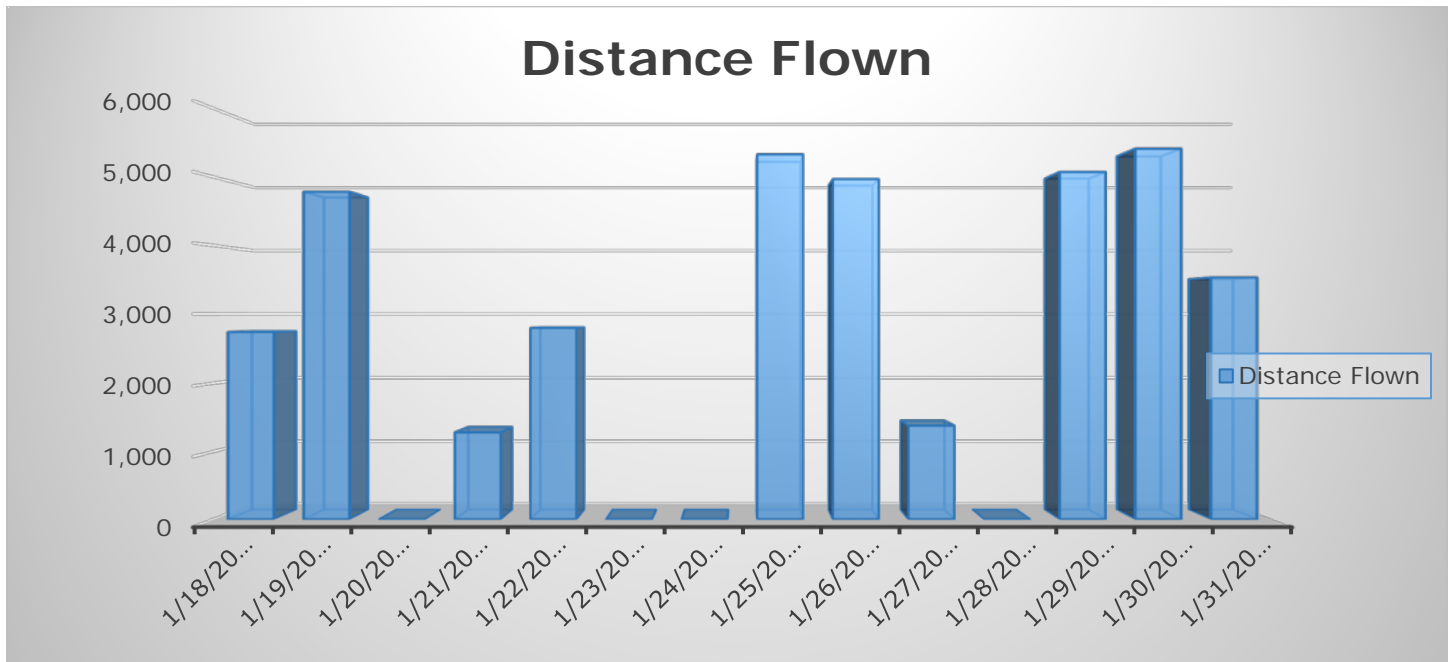
1/31/2021: The morning's calm, cool weather was a welcome change from yesterday. Crews and planes were loaded and ready to go before sunrise, and three planes were up with the sun. One plane had issues with its communication unit, which was replaced quickly and allowed the plane to launch only slightly behind schedule.

Command and aircraft management personnel worked with the assistant airport manager to assess the impact of limited fuel availability on refueling between the first and second rounds. A fuel tanker was expected in the late morning. Three planes were refueled, reloaded, and launched on schedule for their final flights of the Texas ORVP. One plane waited to be fueled until after the airport fuel tanks were refilled and allowed to settle. All planes had returned to the airport shortly after 3 pm, completing distribution of the 1,104,600 oral rabies vaccine baits designated for fixed-wing aircraft in the Border Maintenance Zone.

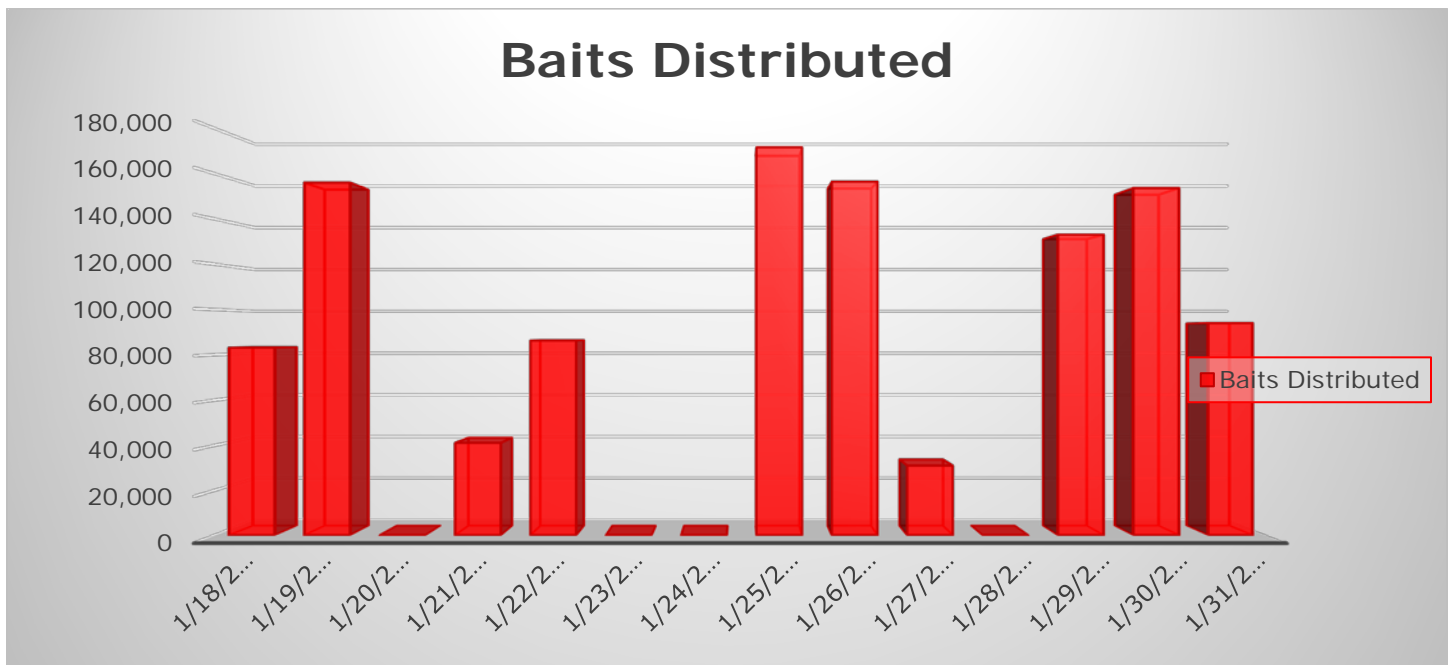
Some TWS and Dynamic Aviation personnel began their return trips home in the afternoon, and the remaining personnel will leave Alpine tomorrow.

Many thanks to all of the participants for all of their hard work, and safe travels home!

Distance Flown By Day



Baits Distributed By Day



Daily Map

