



INDEPENDENT CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS, INC.

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INDEPENDENT CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION OF TEXAS REACTS TO USDA PHASED REOPENING OF SOUTHERN BORDER TO LIVESTOCK IMPORTS

Lockhart, TX — The Independent Cattlemen's Association of Texas (ICA) details the following timeline conveying truthful events prompting serious concern about the United States Department of Agriculture's latest policy announcement regarding the U.S. southern border reopening to livestock imports.

April 8th, Gerardo López Palacios was shot and killed in broad daylight. Two gunmen ambushed him with nine-millimeter firearms at the entrance of a neighborhood in Chihuahua City. Palacios served as Operations Manager for the major cattle trade union in the Mexican state of Chihuahua, Unión Ganadera Regional de Chihuahua (UGRCH).

The northern Mexican state of Chihuahua is where a large majority of all live cattle imports are regulated and received into the United States at the southern border.

The official investigation reported that Palacios was murdered due to his role and authority in the issuance of livestock identification tags. As Operations Manager for the union, he managed the Mexican state's livestock identification (ID) tag system, which distributes electronic ear tags to livestock for export to the United States. Palacios also handled livestock mobilization permits for the state of Chihuahua. The official investigation reported he faced substantial pressure to issue movement permits for livestock that did not meet the animal health requirements needed.

April 22nd, Lina Alejandra Rodriguez, the National Secretary of Mexico's Cattlewomen Union, Mujeres Ganaderas de México (MUGAM), President of the union's Chihuahua chapter, and a mother of four was brutally stabbed to death 16 times in broad daylight at her property and place of business.

June 3rd, the New World Screwworm (NWS) reached the United States and Texas independent cattle producers in and near the infested zones have endured movement restrictions, mandatory identification, required treatment, added labor needs, and jeopardized herd health. These producers have absorbed the added cost of it all, including losses in market value since the NWS arrival.

June 10th, Agriculture Secretary Rollins, before the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture acknowledged in her testimony that a significant reason for the upward movement of NWS through Mexico and its presence in the U.S. was caused by "the Mexican cartels with the illicit cattle traffic"

July 22nd, a public news report and official criminal investigation exposed the son and other close relatives of the most recent former Mexican President, Lopez Obrador, for operating a network of illegal cattle trafficking from Central America. In addition to the family of the Mexican President, those exposed in the scheme included Miguel Jerónimo, President of the Southern Mexico Cattle Union, Ganaderos Sur-Sureste (GSS). The report detailed a black-market operation using Mexican state issued electronic livestock ID tags and falsified movement documentation fraudulently classifying the Central American cattle as Mexican cattle originating from Mexico. Falsified documents and black-market ID tags

which permitted the northern movement of the cattle. Some involved in the scheme are facing legal proceedings but remain free due to court injunctions with it unlikely those involved will face any prison time.

July 24th, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a coordinated, phased reopening of southern cattle ports from Mexico

July 29th, the USDA announced an enhanced Mexican cattle inspection process as a component of the phased reopening.

The announced inspection process enhancements are very similar or near identical to the inspection process announced by the USDA for Mexican cattle importations that followed the November 2024 first NWS detection in southern Mexico and USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) action temporarily halting cattle and bison imports.

When imports resumed in early February 2025 under a new bilateral protocol these were the near identical protocols required of Mexico in coordination with the USDA:

- *Animals underwent pre-clearance inspection and treatment for screwworm by trained/authorized veterinarians in Mexico.*
- *They were held in APHIS-approved pre-export inspection pens.*
- *Mexican officials re-inspected them.*
- *Final APHIS inspection occurred at the U.S. ports (e.g., Santa Teresa, NM and Douglas, AZ).*
- *Cattle and bison were dipped in treatment to ensure they were free of NWS*

These enhanced screwworm-specific measures failed at that time and unfortunately will fail again to stop the further erosion of our U.S. herd health and prevent the furthered imposition of burdensome animal health regulations on U.S. cattlemen resulting from those very failures. Failure not from a lack of USDA effort on the NWS front or the lack of thoughtfulness from Secretary Rollins on any specific inspection measure the Agency implemented but solely due to the lack of integrities held and displayed by our southern trade partner in question, and the devolving nature of their culture of governance in these modern times.

ICA Second Vice-President, Jackie Parson, makes the organization's position clear, *"Mexico's access to the U.S. Market should be treated as a great privilege, particularly under current circumstances they've largely induced. Moreover, no U.S. cattle producer north of the border should be subjugated in any form, directly or indirectly to the very real livestock health and safety threats continually perpetuated by the players that deeply influence the Mexican government and cattle trade south of the border"*.

Our U.S. federal government has expended tremendous resources to solve the western hemisphere's NWS situation that Mexico has most certainly exacerbated. ICA appreciates the delayed timeline and phased reopening approach, opposed to considering a more rapid or complete reopening approach. However, we ask that the USDA not expend further resources to assist Mexico in regaining and maintaining the privilege of access to the U.S. market for livestock imports. Additionally, ICA strongly encourages and remains hopeful Secretary Rollins will exercise her measured leadership once again by reversing course on this policy, as she has effectively done so in the past.

The Independent Cattlemen's Association has been representing cattlemen since 1974. As the premier representative for the cattle industry, ICA works hard to provide an effective legislative voice for farmers, ranchers, cow/calf producers, and rural Texans. Our objective is to promote policy change that supports cattlemen and their well-being, while countering policy change that hinders an independent producer's ability to remain profitable.