



## 2024 Texas Oral Rabies Vaccine Distribution Update

### **1/8/2024:**

The Oral Rabies Vaccination Program (ORVP) project personnel from Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) Zoonosis Control (ZC), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Rabies Management Program (NRMP), Texas Wildlife Services, and Dynamic Aviation converged at 3:30 pm at the South Texas International Airport (STIA) in Edinburg to prepare for the 30<sup>th</sup> annual ORVP vaccine bait airdrop. Staff set up the USDA's command trailer and confirmed that the bait inventory was correct. A strong cold front arrived in the late afternoon, dropping temperatures from the low 90s into the low 50s overnight and bringing high, powerfully gusting winds. The winds are projected to continue into tomorrow afternoon, which could delay the first round of flights, scheduled to commence at 1:00 pm. Approximately 277,000 baits will be distributed over the Edinburg leg of the project by fixed wing aircraft and hand baiting.

### **1/9/2024:**

STIA Director Eddie Val Verde and his staff welcomed the project personnel at the main terminal at 8:00 am. The rest of the morning involved project, flight, and safety training briefings for the ORVP flight crew and other project staff. Winds were still high but calmed significantly by late morning, allowing the first round of 4 flights to depart at 1:00 pm, which returned between 3:20 and 3:30. The 2<sup>nd</sup> round of 4 flights departed between 3:45 and 4:10. The day's flights concluded shortly after 6:00 pm, covered 2,598 flight miles, and distributed 82,650 baits.

### **1/10/2024:**

The morning was cool and calm with high, patchy cloud cover. The first round of flights departed at 8:00, returning at 10:30. Wind speeds accelerated in the morning, but the second round of flights was able to depart without issue at 11:00, returning at various times between 1:45 and 2:45. The last round of flights departed between 2:30 and 3:15, returning between 5:00 and 6:00 pm. The day's flights covered 4,870 flight miles and distributed 140,700 baits. A single round of flights by 2 planes tomorrow will complete the Edinburg leg of the project, one day ahead of schedule. No flight operations are scheduled for Friday; however, due to hotel limitations, the project crew will not be able to travel to Del Rio until Saturday, as originally scheduled.

**1/11/2024:**

Only 2 flights were necessary today to complete this leg of the project. Light fog and moderate cloud cover delayed takeoff for both planes until 8:15. One plane completed its scheduled flight and returned at 10:15. The other plane had to abort its flight about half way through its scheduled flight due to heavy cloud cover and returned at 10:25. The cloud cover cleared quickly, allowing the plane to depart at 11:15, completing its originally scheduled flight at 12:10. The day's flights covered 608 flight miles and distributed 24,525 baits. This completes the Edinburg leg of the project, which is now 31% complete. Project operations on Friday will consist of logistical work. Project crew will travel to Del Rio on Saturday, January 13<sup>th</sup> and set up for flights beginning on Sunday.

**1/12/2024:**

There were no flight operations today.

**1/13/2024:**

ORVP project staff traveled from Edinburg to Del Rio today, arriving at Del Rio International Airport (DRIA) about 3:00 pm to set up for flight operations that will resume at 8:00 am tomorrow.

**1/14/2024:**

The morning started cold with a high cloud cover. Three rounds of flights were scheduled for today, each running about 2 hours. Three planes departed between 8:00 and 8:30 and were able to bait for 30-60 minutes in the zones around Laughlin Air Force Base (LAFB) but then had to return to DRIA due to low cloud cover and poor visibility. The airspace around LAFB is open to bait drop operations today and Monday only, so attempting to bait this area is a priority if weather permits. After reconfiguring the day's flight plans, all 4 planes departed at 9:45 but returned immediately due to continuing poor visibility and frozen precipitation over the drop zone. Weather conditions in the project area deteriorated during the day and the day's remaining flights were cancelled at 3:30. The day's flights covered 531 flight miles and distributed 8,100 baits.

**1/15/2024:**

The start of flight operations was delayed until late morning due to sub-freezing temperatures and cloud cover; all the planes had to be de-iced. The cloud cover cleared rapidly in the late morning and the first round of 4 flights began departing at 11:45, returning between 2:15 and 3:15. The second round of flights departed between 2:50 and 3:50, returning between 5:30 and 6:45. The 2 zones around Laughlin AFB were completed, with partial completion of 3 zones to the west. The day's flights covered 3,329 flight miles and distributed 95,775 baits.

**1/16/2024:**

It was a very cold morning at 19 degrees. The skies were mostly sunny with high, patchy, thin clouds. All 4 flights in the first round departed beginning at 8:00 and returned about 10:45. The second round of flights departed between 11:15 and 11:45 and returned between 2:00 and 2:45. The last round of flights departed between 2:30 and 3:30 with all flights returning between 5:15 and 6:15. The 12 flights today covered 4,963 flight miles and distributed 132,000 baits.

**1/17/2024:**

The first round of flights began departing at 8:00. The weather today was improved over yesterday- still cold at 22 degrees, but with clear skies and calm winds. The first-round flights returned between 10:00 and 11:00. The second-round flights departed between 10:40 and 11:30 and returned between 1:00 and 2:30. A single plane flew a third round, departing at 1:30 and returning at 4:20. The 9 flights today covered 3,454 flight miles, distributed 99,000 baits, and completed the Del Rio leg of the project, which is now 68% complete. Project crew will travel to Alpine tomorrow and set up for flight operations that will resume on Friday, January 19<sup>th</sup>.

**1/18/2024:**

ORVP project staff traveled from Del Rio to Alpine today, arriving at Alpine-Casparis Airport (DRIA) about 12:30 to set up for flight operations that will resume at 8:00 am tomorrow.

**1/19/2024:**

Another cold morning, with clear skies and moderate winds. The first round of 4 flights began departing at 8:00 am, after which the skies turned cloudy. The first-round flights returned between 10:30 and 11:00. The second round of flights departed between 11:00 and 11:30 as the skies began to clear again and returned between 1:30 and 2:00. Skies remained sunny and the cold temperatures persisted for the remainder of the day. The third round of flights began departing between 2:00 and 2:30 and returned between 4:45 and 5:15. The 12 flights today covered 4,771 flight miles and distributed 118,875 baits.

**1/20/2024:**

Today was the last day of the 2024 ORVP bait drop. Temperatures were even colder than yesterday, but skies were clear with calm winds, so the day's flights were unimpeded by weather. The first flights departed on schedule at 8:00 am and returned between 10:30 and 10:45. The second, and final, round of flights departed between 11:15 and 11:30 and returned between 2:00 and 2:30. The 8 flights today covered 3,503 flight miles and distributed 86,400 baits, completing the 2024 ORVP bait drop campaign. The total project consisted of 28,628 fixed wing flight miles and, in combination with targeted helicopter baiting and ground baiting, distributed 820,200 baits over 12,488 square miles in 18 counties.

Figure 1 Distance Flown

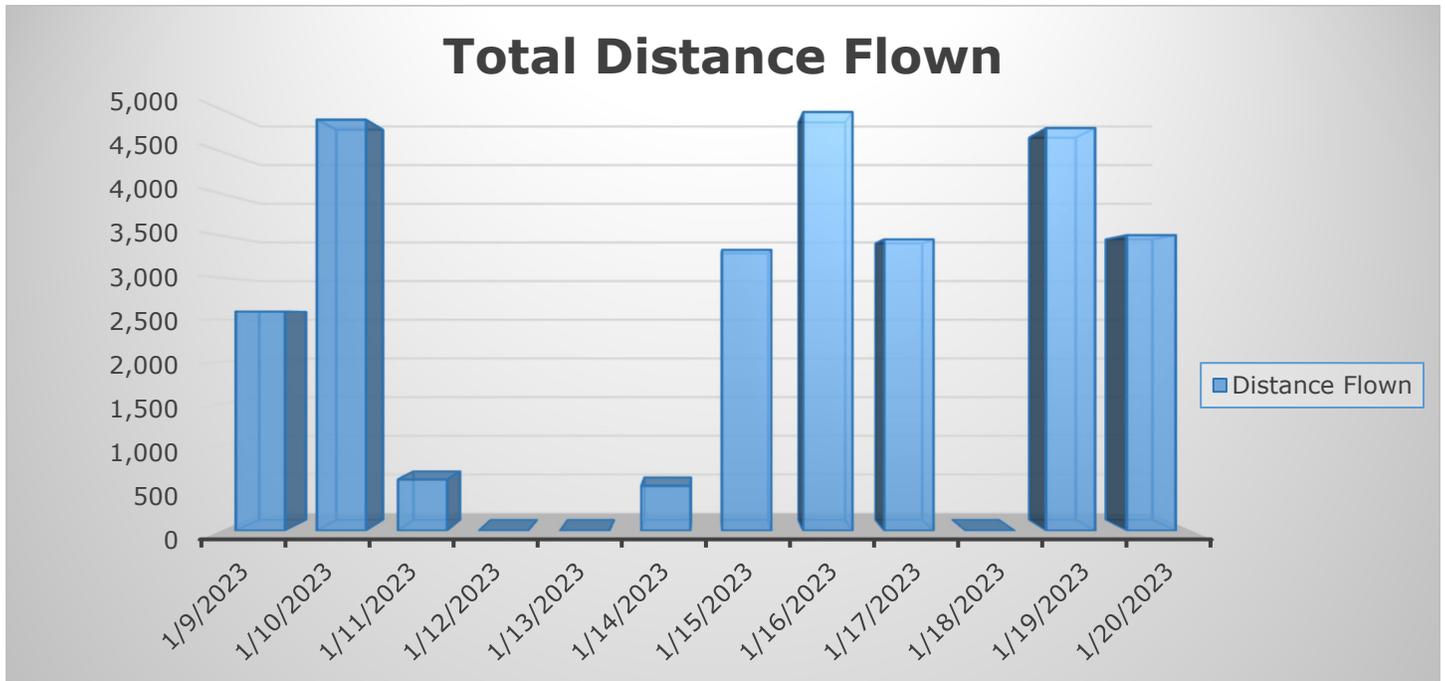


Figure 2 Total Baits Distributed

