

TICKS & FLIES: NEW ANIMAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

DECEMBER 4TH

Frontier Extension District will host a New Animal Health Challenges meeting on December 4 at 7:00 p.m. at the Overbrook Livestock Commission Company in Overbrook, Kansas.

Dr. Cassandra Olds, Livestock Entomologist at Kansas State University, will be the featured speaker. She will discuss two emerging pests that pose potential threats to livestock production in Kansas: The Asian Longhorned Tick and the New World Screwworm. Dr. Olds will cover how to identify each pest, what steps to take if they are found, and the diseases or damage they may cause to livestock.

On October 7, the Kansas Department of Agriculture confirmed the first detection of the Asian Longhorned Tick in Kansas. It was found on a dog in Franklin County. While one confirmed tick does not mean there is an established population, it's critical to raise awareness about the diseases this pest can carry and the potential impact on cattle herds.

A primary concern is the tick's ability to transmit *Theileria orientalis* Ikeda, a protozoan parasite that infects red and white blood cells. Infected cattle can develop anemia, weakness, and, in some cases, die. Unfortunately, the disease is not treatable with antibiotics, and infected cattle remain carriers for life.

The Kansas Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory at K-State is one of only three labs in the U.S. with a validated test for this disease. Since 2022, the lab has tested nearly 2,000 samples from across the country, with 38% testing positive.

In addition to animal health concerns, the Asian Longhorned Tick can also transmit Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever to humans. People are encouraged to take precautions when in wooded or grassy areas—wear long sleeves, use insect repellent, and check for ticks after outdoor activities.

The New World Screwworm is another serious pest that threatens both livestock and wildlife. Although it was eradicated in the U.S. in the 1960s (and again following a 2016 outbreak), changing infestation patterns are raising concerns about reintroduction.

As of September 2025, the nearest confirmed case was detected in northern Mexico, less than 70 miles from the U.S. border—marking the northernmost detection of this outbreak.

While the New World Screwworm is not expected to survive year-round in Kansas due to climate conditions, there is still a risk of introduction through the movement of infested animals, especially during the spring and summer months.

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend this informative and timely event. Understanding these emerging threats is key to protecting the health of both livestock and people in Kansas.