



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of State
Health Services

2024

**FLU AND RESPIRATORY
DISEASE CONFERENCE**

Office of the Chief State Epidemiologist

August 7th – 9th, 2024

Message from the DSHS Chief State Epidemiologist

Let Us Continue to Communicate ... Research ... Collaborate

Welcome to the 2024 Flu and Respiratory Disease Conference!

This conference is a great opportunity to come together to collaborate and share knowledge on respiratory disease surveillance in our state.

This year featured unique challenges and opportunities that highlight the critical importance of your work. From our ever-evolving efforts around COVID-19, to a landmark RSV season with exciting new prevention tools, to our current response to H5N1 in dairy cattle, we have seen the many impacts of this work in our communities.

I hope you will use your time here to strengthen your connections to one another, to learn from one another, and to get energized for another exciting season and year to come!

Thank you for everything you do to protect the people of Texas!



Varun Shetty, MD, MBA, MS

**Chief State Epidemiologist,
Texas Department of State Health Services**

Table of Contents

Message from the DSHS Chief State Epidemiologist	3
Table of Contents	4
Thursday, August 8 th , 2024 Session Schedule Summary.....	5
Thursday, August 8 th , 2024 Sessions	6
Friday, August 9 th , 2024 Session Schedule Summary	10
Friday, August 9 th , 2024 Sessions	11
Venue & Parking	13
DSHS General Information.....	14

Thursday, August 8th, 2024 Session Schedule Summary

Time	Lil Tex	Longhorn	Stadium
8:00	Registration & Check In		
8:15			
8:30			
8:45			
9:00	Avian Influenza (H5N1) Epizootic – Texas, 2024		
9:15			
9:30			
9:45			
10:00	Identifying Key Facilities for Texas Influenza Surveillance	CSTE Position Statement and change for COVID-19	Tales From the Field: Regional Veterinary Perspective: HPAI Outbreak Investigation
10:15			
10:30			
10:45			
11:00	Respiratory Vaccine Illness and Surveillance	Reflections on Our First Year as an Influenza Sequencing Center	Enhanced Respiratory Illness Surveillance along the West Texas-Mexico Border
11:15			
11:30			
11:45			
12:00	Lunch Break, open floor networking		
12:15			
12:30			
12:45			
1:00			
1:15			
1:30	Influenza 101 - An Overview of Influenza Surveillance Reporting and Processing	LRN Submissions Breakout Session	How "Bird Flu" Has Affected Dairies
1:45			
2:00			
2:15			
2:30	Break		
2:45			
3:00	Region 1 - H5 Response		
3:15			
3:30			
3:45			
4:00	Networking Activity		
4:15			
4:30			
4:45			
5:00			

Thursday, August 8th, 2024 Sessions

9:10 a.m. – 9:50 a.m. **Avian Influenza (H5N1) Epizootic – Texas, 2024** **Lil Tex**

This presentation gives a brief background on H5N1 and summarizes the response to the epizootic by Texas Department of State Health Services staff. Summary information on animal positives and lessons learned will be shared.



*Briana O'Sullivan, MPH
Epidemiologist IV
DSHS Zoonosis Control
Branch*

10:00 a.m. – 10:40 a.m. **Identifying Key Facilities for Texas Influenza Surveillance** **Lil Tex**

This session will highlight a multistage analysis of Texas's most comprehensive influenza surveillance system, Essence, through regional identification of key facilities that enrich influenza surveillance. Information provided will cover current gaps in surveillance, analysis methods, regional mapping of key facilities, and next steps to fortifying influenza surveillance in Texas.



*Chloe Martinez, MPH
EMSTR Epidemiologist II
DSHS Injury Prevention*

10:05 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. **CSTE Position Statement and change for COVID-19** **Longhorn**

This presentation will cover the proposed updates to the standardized surveillance case definition for SARS-CoV-2 infection, emphasizing the need to discontinue national notification. This change is warranted as the CDC no longer regularly analyzes or publishes case-based data, though it retains and shares the data on request. This presentation will also discuss the development of a comprehensive national surveillance strategy to effectively monitor and respond to respiratory viruses.



*Dannish Ghias, MPH
COVID-19 Epidemiologist
III
DSHS EAIDU IDCU*

10:10 a.m. – 10:50 a.m. **Tales From the Field: Regional Veterinary Perspective: HPAI Outbreak Investigation** **Stadium**

This session will cover the investigation that occurred from the regional zoonosis veterinarian's experience and will compare and contrast both PHR 1 and 2/3 successes and failures.



*Cherissa Abdul-Hamid,
DVM, MPH
Regional Zoonosis
Veterinarian
DSHS PHR 1, Zoonosis
Control Program*

11:00 a.m. – 11:40 a.m. Enhanced Respiratory Illness Surveillance along the West Texas-Mexico Border Stadium

To address the goals set by the CDC's Division of Global Migration Health and the HHS (Health and Human Services) Office of Global Affairs for the Binational Border Infectious Disease Surveillance programs (BIDS), the DSHS PHR 9/10 Office of Border Public Health BIDS program has teamed with the Naval Health Research Center to collect and test human specimens of patients complaining of Influenza-like Illness or Febrile Respiratory Illness in counties along the US-MX Border.



*Rebecca Basurto-Gonzalez, BS Micr
BIDS Epidemiologist
DSHS PHR 9/10 Office of
Border Public Health*

11:05 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. Respiratory Vaccine Illness and Surveillance Lil Tex

Vaccines are a proven method to mitigate the burden of disease. In this presentation, respiratory illness' vaccine surveillance and data trends will be explored, further explaining the current landscape for trends in the State of Texas.



*Tyler Swate
Epidemiologist II
DSHS Assessment,
Compliance, and
Epidemiology Branch,
Immunization Section*

11:10 a.m. – 11:50 a.m. Reflections on Our First Year as an Influenza Sequencing Center Longhorn

The Texas Public Health Lab was awarded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL) as one of five Influenza Sequencing Centers in the U.S. in 2023. In order to support Influenza surveillance and vaccine development, next generation sequencing of influenza A and B was performed, and sequencing data was shared with CDC, using APHL's cloud-based Informatics Messaging Services (AIMS). This presentation will provide a summary of our first-year experiences and our goals for the next Flu season.



*Bonnie Oh, PhD
Molecular Biologist IV,
Microbial Genomics Team
Lead
DSHS Public Health
Laboratory Division,
Microbiology Unit, Genetic
Sequencing Branch*

12:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. LUNCH BREAK

1:40 p.m. – 2:20 p.m. Influenza 101 - An Overview of Influenza Surveillance Reporting and Processing

Lil Tex

An overview of influenza surveillance in the State of Texas, including reporting requirements, processes, and procedures. Highlighting the framework of partnerships and reporting mechanisms that are critical for effective respiratory disease surveillance.



*Emilio Gonzales, MPH
State Influenza
Surveillance Coordinator,
Epidemiologist III
DSHS EAIDU*

1:50 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. How "Bird Flu" has Affected Dairies

Stadium

Texas is the 4th largest dairy producing state in the U.S. After Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) was diagnosed in Texas dairies, the dairy industry and both state and federal partners have taken steps to enhance biosecurity on the farm and understand how HPAI affects dairy product safety.



*Timothy Stevenson, DVM,
PhD
Associate Commissioner
DSHS Consumer
Protection Division*



*Adam Buuck, MPH, CPH
Director, Food and Drug
Section
DSHS, Consumer
Protection Division*

2:00 p.m. – 2:40 p.m. LRN Submissions Breakout Session

Longhorn

Texas Department of State Health Clinical Virology Laboratory Team Lead and Senior Molecular Biologist will review and discuss current influenza submission guidance with TX LRN contacts and epidemiologists in attendance. Other topics will include updates particular to influenza activity, reporting, extraction and testing platforms, upcoming proficiency panels, and additional respiratory testing performed.



*Jennifer Gonzales
Clinical Virology Team
Lead
DSHS Public Health
Laboratory Division*



*Anita Irving
Clinical Virology Senior
Molecular Biologist
DSHS Public Health
Laboratory Division*

3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Region 1 - H5 Response

Lil Tex

A look into the steps taken in the H5N1(HPAI) response in Northwest Texas PHR 1 following Avian Flu detection in dairy cattle and monitoring/testing of ill dairy cow workers. This presentation will highlight the barrier to care that comes from extreme distances, facility practices, and an unwillingness to work with public health prevention efforts.



*Samantha Curtis, MPH
Epidemiologist II
DSHS PHR 1*



*Cherissa Abdul-Hamid,
DVM, MPH
Regional Zoonosis
Veterinarian
DSHS PHR 1, Zoonosis
Control Program*

4:10 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Networking Activity

Lil Tex

We hope you join us for our networking event this year! Come play a fun game, meet colleagues from across the state and win some fun prizes!



*Emilio Gonzales, MPH
State Flu Coordinator,
Epidemiologist III
DSHS Emerging and
Acute Infectious Disease
Unit*

Friday, August 9th, 2024 Session Schedule Summary

Time	Lil Tex	Balcones	Stadium
8:00	Registration & Check In		
8:05			
8:10			
8:15			
8:20			
8:25			
8:30	Wastewater-Based Monitoring of Respiratory Diseases	Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Lab's (TVMDL) Role in the HPAI Outbreak in Dairy Cattle	COVID-19 Surveillance in Texas: Evolving Trends and What's Changed
8:35			
8:40			
8:45			
8:50			
8:55			
9:00			
9:05			
9:10			
9:15			
9:20			
9:25			
9:30	Novel Influenza: Reporting Deep Dive	Measles Overview: 2023	Submitting Specimens Successfully to the DSHS Austin Laboratory
9:35			
9:40			
9:45			
9:50			
9:55			
10:00			
10:05			
10:10			
10:15			
10:20			
10:25	Break		
10:30	Closing Plenary		
10:35			
10:40			
10:45			
10:50			
10:55			
11:00			
11:05			
11:10			
11:15			
11:20			
11:25			
11:30			

Friday, August 9th, 2024 Sessions

8:30 a.m. – 9:10 a.m.

COVID-19 Surveillance in Texas: Evolving Trends and What's Changed

Stadium

This presentation will look into any developing trends in COVID-19 transmission, positivity rate, fatality rate amongst different groups throughout the Public Health Regions in Texas and analyze how it has changed from the past year.



*Mahar Hasan, MPH
COVID-19 Epidemiologist
I
DSHS, EAIDU COVID
Team*

8:35 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

Wastewater-Based Monitoring of Respiratory Diseases

Lil Tex

Join us as we delve into the science and implementation of wastewater-based monitoring of respiratory diseases. This talk will provide an overview of the systematic sampling, processing, and analysis of wastewater to detect the genetic material of targeted pathogens, as well as the utility of wastewater-based disease monitoring to support respiratory disease outbreak detection and response.



*Victoria Salinas, MPH,
CPH
Medical Research
Specialist
DSHS Environmental
Epidemiology & Disease
Registries Section*

8:40 a.m. – 9:20 a.m.

Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Lab's (TVMDL) Role in the HPAI Outbreak in Dairy Cattle

Balcones

This session will introduce the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Lab, how they function in serving Texas, and the role their operations have played in addressing the HPAI H5N1 outbreak in dairy cattle in the Texas panhandle.



*Terry Hensley, MS, DVM
Assistant Agency Director
for Diagnostic Services,
Texas A&M Veterinary
Medical Diagnostic
Laboratory and Extension
Veterinarian
Texas A&M Veterinary
Medical Diagnostic
Laboratory*



*Alexis Thompson, DVM,
PhD, DACVPM (Epi)
Veterinary Diagnostician
Texas A&M Veterinary
Medical Diagnostic
Laboratory*

9:30 a.m. – 10:10 a.m. Novel Influenza: Reporting Deep Dive Lil Tex

A detailed review of the processes for case ascertainment and classification of novel influenzas. This includes a review of possible reporting changes following a revised CSTE position statement proposed this year.



*Emilio Gonzales, MPH
State Influenza
Surveillance Coordinator,
Epidemiologist III
DSHS EAIDU*

9:35 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Measles Overview: 2023 Balcones

This session will provide an overview of a measles cases in 2023, highlighting timelines, and working through case scenarios.



*Elise Huebner, MS, CPH,
CIC
Epidemiology Team Lead,
Vaccine Preventable
Diseases
DSHS EAIDU*

**9:40 a.m. – 10:20 a.m. Submitting Specimens Successfully to the Stadium
DSHS Austin Laboratory**

This presentation is an overview of the DSHS Microbiology Unit's specimen submission process, including required notifiable isolate submissions. Tips on how to avoid the most common causes of specimen rejection are discussed. The Laboratory's specimen courier program and results web portal access are also covered.



*Niamh Gray
Education Specialist III
DSHS Public Health
Laboratory Division,
Microbiology Unit*

10:40 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Closing Plenary Lil Tex

EAIDU State Flu Coordinator Emilio Gonzales will present closing remarks on how flu and respiratory disease surveillance continues to evolve within a changing landscape to meet the public health goals for all Texans.



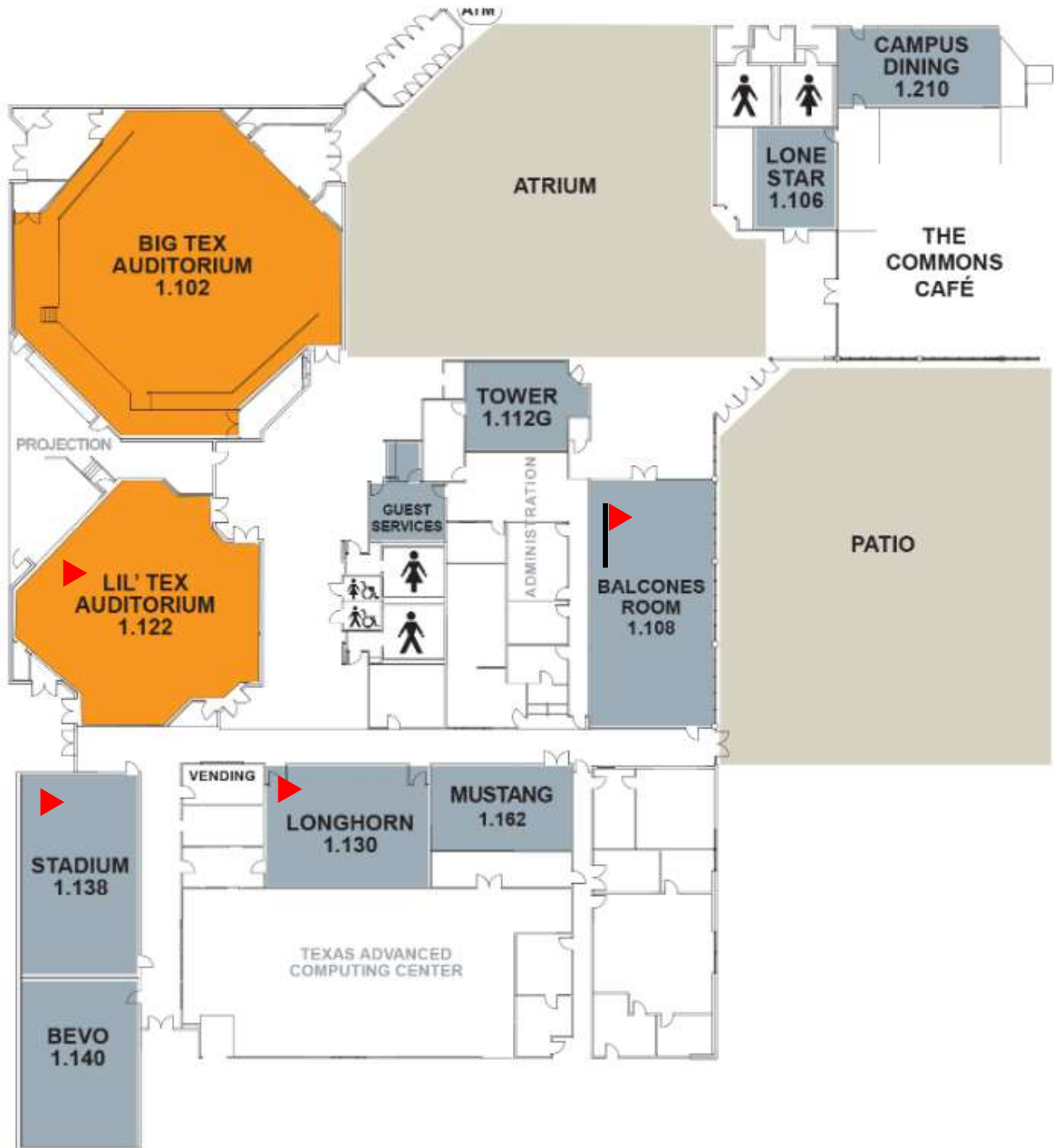
*Emilio Gonzales, MPH
State Flu Coordinator,
Epidemiologist III
DSHS Emerging and
Acute Infectious Disease
Unit*

Venue & Parking

The Commons Conference Center is located in the J. J. Pickle Research Center at 2901 Read Granberry Trail, Austin, TX 78758. Visitor parking can be found in the parking lots to the north, west, and east of the Commons building. ADA accessible spaces are located on the west and north sides of the building. Visitors using these parking lots will need to print and display a parking permit where it is visible on their dashboard.

Food and drink can be purchased on-site at the Commons Café which operates from 7:30 am – 2 pm daily.

Further information about the Commons can be found online at <https://commons.utexas.edu/>.



DSHS General Information

Vision

- ★ Protecting the health of Texans

Values

- ★ Ensure effective use of resources
- ★ Collaborate with our partners
- ★ Serve the public with compassion and respect
- ★ Empower a dedicated and diverse workforce
- ★ Lead with integrity and empathy
- ★ Strive for excellence

Mission

- ★ Improving health outcomes of all Texans by providing essential laboratory services and using proven strategies to control emerging and ongoing infectious disease threats.



TEXAS

Health and Human Services

**Texas Department of State
Health Services**

Contact Information

Emerging and Acute Infectious Disease Unit

Texas Department of State Health Services

PO Box 149347

Mail Code 1960

Austin, Texas 78756

Phone: 512-776-7676

Fax: 512-776-7616

EAIDUConference@dshs.texas.gov