

# Foot-and-mouth lab looks for new home

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Five U.S. states are vying for a \$500 million federal research center that would house highly infectious animal diseases such as foot-and-mouth.

But moving the facility mainland -- the only experiments on the devastating livestock virus take place on the government-run Plum Island, N.Y -- seems as choppy as the waters separating the island from the United States, The Dallas Morning News reported. Cattle associations and farmers said they want the best possible research but fear a U.S. epidemic.

The National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility, to be chosen next fall and requiring an act of the U.S. Congress, would replace Plum Island, which Homeland Security officials say is outdated, inadequate and difficult to secure.

"Of course we support a new lab," Texas Cattle Feeders Association President Ross Wilson told the Morning News. "The question becomes, can we do it safely on the mainland?"

Yes, said York Duncan, president of the Texas Research Park in San Antonio, competing for the facility. The labs already research deadly diseases and have flawless records, he said.

"There's always the human-error factor. Nothing's ever 100 percent," Duncan told the newspaper.

Texas, Kansas, Georgia, North Carolina and Mississippi are competing

for the facility.

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