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**COMMISSIONER STAPLES, ATTORNEY GENERAL ABBOTT  
DEFEND EXOTIC WILDLIFE INDUSTRY AGAINST  
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S BURDENSOME REGULATION**

*Federal rules will result in damage to Texas economy and possible extinction of species*

AUSTIN - Texas Agriculture Commissioner Todd Staples today joined the Texas Attorney General in filing an amicus brief in support of the Exotic Wildlife Association's lawsuit against the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The suit is asking the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia to stop a rule that will severely limit private Texas landowners' ability to manage three species of African antelope, despite the landowners' success in increasing the number of animals in the United States.

"Leave it to the federal government to create a problem where one doesn't exist," Commissioner Staples said. "All Americans should withstand overly burdensome and unnecessary regulations, and protect the rights of private citizens who have responsibly promoted the conservation of these exotic species."

Three antelope species - the Scimitar Horned Oryx, Addax and Dama Gazelle - are endangered in regions of Northern Africa. In 2005, Texas ranchers were given an exemption from the regulatory requirements of the Endangered Species Act. As a result of this exemption and favorable management by Texas ranchers, these animals, which are virtually extinct in their native Africa, number in the tens of thousands in Texas. If the court does not act, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will implement a policy that will require ranchers and hunters to undergo a complex and cumbersome permitting process to manage and hunt these exotic species in Texas.

"This is the most successful conservation effort ever undertaken by game breeders and ranchers here in Texas," said Charly Seale, Executive Director of the Exotic Wildlife Association, based in Ingram, Texas. "We have literally brought these animals back from the brink of extinction in their native Africa and are currently involved in a conservation project that will send Scimitar Horned Oryx and Addax back to their native land."

The exotic wildlife industry in Texas annually generates an estimated \$1.3 billion in economic activity thanks in large part to property owners who often participate in wildlife management to supplement the financial demands of land ownership. As it stands, federal permitting requirements could replace exotic management incentives with a range of regulatory costs that would discourage conservation, resulting in losses to the antelope species as well as to valuable habitat that supports other plants and animals.

"Bureaucrats in Washington are imposing ill-considered regulations that trample private property rights while doing little or nothing to help endangered species," Texas Attorney

General Greg Abbott said. "After decades of careful conservation efforts, Texas exotic game ranches successfully fostered thriving herds of rare African antelope, even as all three species grew virtually extinct in the wild. I'm joining a legal action that will protect both ranchers in Texas and the rare animals they help cultivate."

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has gone on record as saying the efforts of domestic exotic breeders have had a positive impact on the wild species. Through management efforts, breeders provide genetics for propagation; stock to release into the wild; and lessen the pressure on native African herds.

"Instead of upholding private property rights and letting the market system continue working, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will enforce a new requirement that effectively penalizes Texas ranchers and landowners for a job well-done," Commissioner Staples said.

If the court does not issue an injunction, the new requirements are set to go into effect on April 4. To review the amicus brief click [here](#).