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OxitecÂ launches cattle pest control solution for Asian blue tick

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Oxitec Ltd, a UK-based, US-owned biotechnology company, has launched the development of a targeted, biological Friendlyâ?¢ solution for the world's most devastating cattle pest, the Asian blue tick, orÂ*Rhipicephalus microplus*. Oxitec is the leading developer of insect-based biological solutions to control pests that transmit disease, destroy crops, and harm livestock.

Oxitec's team validated the key methods for the development of Friendlyâ?¢ *R. microplus* in a feasibility project funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and found that a biological approach may be an effective alternative to chemical pesticides for the management of this dangerous tick. Oxitec's first solution to target a non-insect pest, Friendly™ R microplus, has now been committed to a $4.8 million early development phase by the Foundation. Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, is enabling collaboration with Roslin Institute to build an urgently needed and robust sustainable tick management solution, the Friendlyâ?¢ to support livestock farmers globally.

Kelly Matzen, Oxitecâ??s Chief Technology Officer, added â??Weâ??re looking forward to starting work on development of the worldâ??s most sustainable tick management solution. Iâ??m delighted that the results of our scientific feasibility program have demonstrated the promise of our Friendlyâ?¢ platform, to deliver impact against the worldâ??s most devastating tick pest of cattleâ?•.

Launched in 2021, Oxitec's cattle tick program has conducted in-depth assessments of tick biology and genetics, assessed methods for development of a Friendlyâ?¢ tick solution, artificial production methods, cattle management practices in regions threatened byÂ *R. microplus*, and modelled the impact of future implementation on target tick populations. The results of this

rigorous feasibility phase demonstrated that a future Friendlyâ?¢Â cattle tick solution could deliver highly effectiveÂ*R. microplus*Â population suppression and that it represents a highly promising biological future alternative to chemical pesticides. This ground-breaking program will be conducted in collaboration with leading experts at one of the world's foremost livestock research organisations, the Roslin Institute inÂ Edinburgh, Scotland.

TheÂ *R. microplus*Â tick blood-feeds on cattle, causing major losses in productivity and animal death by spreading deadly diseases such as babesiosis. Originally native toÂ Asia, the invasiveÂ*R. microplus*Â is now widely distributed acrossÂ AfricaÂ and Southern andÂ Central America.Â*R. microplus*Â is widely regarded as the world's most important arthropod pest of cattle, costing the livestock industry and farmers billions of dollars each year. InÂ BrazilÂ alone this tick costs an estimatedÂ $3.2 billionÂ in losses and management costs. Management ofÂ*R. microplus*Â is highly reliant on chemical acaricides (pesticides), to which the tick is widely resistant.

Grey Frandsen, Oxitecâ??s CEO, commented,Â "This new program is a significant milestone for Oxitec, enabling us to start building our first Friendlyâ?¢ product targeting a non-insect pest. TheÂ*Rhipicephalus microplus*Â tick is a dangerous pest of cattle that threatens livelihoods across the world, and itâ??s still spreading. More chemical pesticides arenâ??t the answer. Weâ??re focused on stopping it in its tracks by translating Oxitecâ??s proven, biological technology platform into a Friendlyâ?¢ solution that offers a new level of impact against this tick, without harming the environment.â?