

USAHA/AAVLD COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL ANIMAL HEALTH LABORATORY NETWORK (NAHLN)

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The Committee met on October 27, 2019 at the Rhode Island Convention Center in Providence, Rhode Island, from 12:00pm – 3:00pm. There were 40 members and 44 guests present.

Presentations & Reports

1. NAHLN FY2020 Appropriations – Bruce Akey
 - a. The NAHLN received a total of \$16.3 million (NIFA + APHIS) which is the same as last year. Unfortunately, the FY2020 Annual Budget has not actually passed yet and may not pass until early in 2020.
2. 2018 Farm Bill – Christie Loiacano
 - a. Awards from the competitive grants solicitation should be announced by 12/31/2019
 - b. \$10m Split between NADPRP and NAHLN
 - i. NAHLN received 53 proposals totaling ~ \$17.5 million, NADPRP received ~ 70 proposals.
3. NAHLN Coordinating Council
 - i. Need new representative for NIFA. AHPIS has appointed an interim representative.
 - ii. Working to update NAHLN strategic plan. Priorities:
 1. Disease identification and surveillance
 2. Standardize data capture and electronic messaging
 3. Integrate animal health long-term goals
 4. Ensure a coordinated effort to meet resource needs for the NAHLN
 5. Continuation of codification efforts
 - iii. NAHLN lab requirements
 1. No limit to the total number of labs in the NAHLN or the number of labs per NAHLN level.
 2. Established director qualifications
 - a. Minimum: A DVM degree plus Veterinary Diagnostic Lab work experience
 - b. Preferred: A DVM plus a PhD with board certification and at least 5 years Veterinary Diagnostic Lab experience
 - c. 4 NAHLN labs currently have non-DVM directors

3. All NAHLN labs must be able to message for all approved diseases by September 30, 2021
 - a. Currently all Level 1 labs meet this requirement
 - iv. Dr. Loiacano described the Coordinating Council's efforts to re-evaluate the lab assessment matrix
 4. NAHLN African swine fever (ASF) capacity
 1. Active ASF surveillance started June 1, 2019
 2. Approved NAHLN labs
 - a. 47 labs can conduct 40,000 tests/day
 - i. This number may go down. The labs didn't account for the time necessary to prepare the extractions. The NAHLN is re-evaluating.
 - b. 10 labs provide active surveillance
 - c. 37 additional labs provide passive surveillance
 - d. Over 170 proficiency tested analysts
 3. ASF lab response course on Plum
 - a. Representatives from 32 labs participated
 - b. Lab-focused training in ICS 300 was offered
 - c. The course included an ASF tabletop exercise which was also lab-focused
 - d. Participants were also exposed to a clinical evaluation and necropsy demonstration of ASF-infected pigs
 - ii. SFEAR fully functional ASF exercise designed by USDA was conducted on September 23-26, 2019
 1. 14 states participated
 2. 16 NAHLN labs participated
 - iii. NAHLN Annual Exercise also focused on ASF and was embedded in SFEAR
 1. 35 labs participated
5. NAHLN Quality Standards
 1. Veterinary diagnostic labs are accredited to multiple standards and by multiple bodies including AAVLD.
 2. The NAHLN is planning to accredit member labs in addition to other standards but notes that labs that already meet AAVLD or ISO standards should have no problem achieving the NAHLN accreditation.
6. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) project
 1. Year 1: 19 labs evaluating 4 pathogens
 2. Year 2: 24 labs evaluating 7 pathogens
 3. Year 3 goals:
 - a. increase whole genome sequencing to at least 25% of labs providing WGS
 - b. 75% of labs capable of electronic messaging of AMR data
 - c. Develop interactive website
7. Methods Technical Working Group
 1. Emergency test validation is in place encompassing two approaches:
 - a. SOP already in the lab
 - b. SOP does not already exist
 - c. Results will only be used for positive cases, NOT to move animals or proof of negative testing
8. NAHLN exercises and drills Working Group (John Bare is lead)
 1. Provides informational webinars, and
 2. Conducts NAHLN exercises
9. NAHLN IT Working Group
 1. The group provides input on a wide range of activities and conducts trainings
 2. 52 of the 61 NAHLN labs can message at least one disease
10. NBAF update --- Kimberly Dodd

- a. Focuses on animal health, human health and food security
- b. BSL-3 Enhanced and BSL-4 will allow testing for zoonotic diseases
- c. 400 personnel will staff NBAF, most will be federal employees
 - i. 160 scientific staff split between ARS and APHIS
- d. Will begin transition in 2021 to get approval for FMD transition to the mainland. This process will take at least two years. During this time, USDA will have to maintain both facilities. Dr. Dodd was confident that adequate funding would be forthcoming to support the continued operation and scientific agendas during this transition period.
- e. NBAF Scientist training program
 - i. 10 universities, 15 students currently

Committee Business:

Four resolutions were brought before the committee. Three were approved by voice vote and one was not taken up due to a lack of a second. Topics of the 3 resolutions approved included:

- Providing adequate funding for the National Animal Vaccines and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank and the National Animal Health Laboratory Network
- ASF/CSF Surveillance Program And Tissues For Official ASF Testing In NAHLN Laboratories
- Inclusion of BSL3 Necropsy Space in the Process for NAHLN Laboratory Participation