

REPORT OF THE USAHA/AAVLD COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL ANIMAL HEALTH LABORATORY NETWORK

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The Committee met on October 21, 2012 at the Greensboro Sheraton Hotel, Greensboro, North Carolina, from 12:00 to 2:30 p.m. There were 27 members and 19 guests present.

National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) Funding

Brad Mollet, American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD) Lobbyist discussed his efforts on behalf of the NAHLN in Congress. Through his efforts, we were successful at getting the funding restored for 2012 and raising the level of awareness within Congress regarding the role of the NAHLN and the necessity for continued funding. We are requesting \$9.98 million in funding during the next congress and full funding of \$30 million in the 2012 Farm Bill. This \$30 million is intended to expand funding to a larger number of eligible laboratories so that all NAHLN laboratories can have adequate funding according to their level of participation. AAVLD has two white papers developed to support future legislative efforts and will be asking laboratories to participate in the lobbying efforts.

NAHLN Restructuring Concept Paper

Barb Martin (NAHLN Coordinator) updated the committee on the progress of the NAHLN restructuring concept paper. The document has been edited and reviewed and is awaiting publication in the Federal Register for public comment. This document defines proposed changes to the NAHLN structure and codifies the existence of a NAHLN charter. The charter itself, however, would remain external to the code of federal regulations (CFR) to facilitate future modification as needed. The mechanism to alter the charter is described in the concept document. There was discussion regarding the opportunity for animal agriculture's input into activities of the NAHLN Coordinating Council. It was noted that the NAHLN leadership structure allows for the invitation of industry stakeholders to attend coordinating council meetings or to request an opportunity to present concerns of the industry before the council. Sarah Tomlinson outlined the outcomes of recent test exercises and test validation studies and those planned for 2013:

- She noted that NAHLN is celebrating its 10-year anniversary and has a ten year review document available for distribution.
- The group conducted a number of training sessions including a course on Quality Management Systems for the NAHLN laboratories and VS Memo 580.4 training for laboratory personnel and state and federal representatives involved in investigating adverse animal health events. The need for area veterinarian in charge (AVIC) and state animal health official (SAHO) to remember that there is the opportunity to take duplicate samples for foreign animal disease diagnostician (FADD) investigations was expressed as this is an excellent way to exercise the NAHLN in real time and practice lines of communication.
- In addition, she described on-going collaborative diagnostic development and validation projects conducted with NVSL-FADDL, NAHLN laboratories and others to address stakeholder identified gaps resulting in exercises and Agricultural Screening Tools workshops sponsored by the Foreign Animal and Zoonotic Disease (FAZD) center and Department of Homeland Security (DHS).
- The Laboratory Capacity Estimation Model has been deployed to NAHLN laboratories. This program facilitates accessioning and testing processes for any diagnostic assay. This allows the local laboratories to determine throughput capabilities given various scenarios and allows the NAHLN Coordinator to view an individual lab's current and maximum throughput to guide resource management decisions.

NAHLN IT

Bruce Akey updated the Committee on NAHLN information technology (IT) issues. He noted that Cornell has developed server capabilities to manage the distribution of messaging between participating state diagnostic laboratories, private entities and could serve as a portal into the NAHLN system. This system is a message coordinator and not a data repository. Minimal capabilities are required of participating laboratories and the service is free of charge.

NAHLN Coordinating Council Update

Much of the current effort has been associated with the development of the NAHLN concept paper described earlier. The Coordinating Council is continuing to prioritize IT issues and is currently soliciting nominations for new members to fill expiring terms. National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) noted that they need input from the coordinating council as well as this committee on identifying gaps and prioritizing goals within the 28 laboratories with which they have cooperative agreements.

Technical Methods Working Group

Barb Martin and Terry McElwain discussed the activities of the Technical Methods Working Group. This has been a very involved and focused working group with valuable input on asset deployment and validation. They held two meetings in 2012 to discuss the methods development processes, review complete dossiers for two assays, and provide reviews on assay development or methods comparison projects. Outcomes of reviews for assays for chronic wasting disease (CWD), scrapie, pseudorabies (PRV), swine influenza virus (SIV) and classical swine fever (CSF) were discussed.

NBAF Scientific Panel Review

Terry McElwain updated the Committee on the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF). The Scientific Panel review asked to consider three potential scenarios for addressing concerns associated with development of NBAF: 1) the current proposal; 2) a scaled back version; and 3) remaining at Plum Island and utilizing international bio-safety level (BSL)-4 capabilities. The key outcome was an endorsement of the need for an NBAF facility. The panel felt that the option to remain at Plum Island and/or utilize international resources were not viable options. It was felt that it might be feasible to scale back the project utilizing a model similar to NAHLN if the full-scale NBAF project could not move forward.

Committee Business:

The Committee passed three resolutions on the following subject matter:

1. NAHLN Coordinator support
2. Standardization of equine herpes virus (EHV)-1 polymerase chain reaction (PCR) Testing at Diagnostic Facilities
3. State Animal Laboratory Messaging Service

These resolutions were forwarded to the Committee on Nominations and Resolutions.