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11 May 2009

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## National Animal Health Laboratory Network Toxicology Support Interim Recommendation

Since its inception, NAHLN has worked with the AAVLD and the USDA toward enhancing the Nation's early detection of, response to, and recovery from animal health emergencies, including bioterrorist events, newly emerging diseases, and foreign animal disease agents that threaten the Nation's food supply and public health. The NAHLN model has been conceived and refined to a level that provides laboratories with known and consistent approaches to animal and public health emergencies, and essential organizational and central leadership. However, efforts to date have focused on meeting the needs for infectious disease threats and on the development of a rapid, robust, and secure information technology infrastructure and data repository on infectious diseases. The infrastructure is integrated with the existing animal health and veterinary diagnostic data networks. There is a vital need for well-equipped, staffed, and experienced AAVLD-accredited veterinary analytical toxicology laboratories coordinated within an organized chain of responsibility for surveillance and national response to a toxicology and/or food contamination issue. NAHLN, working closely with the AAVLD, USDA, FDA, local and state authorities can fill this need by using a proven model for the design and implementation of an effective plan.

To that end, the AAVLD Toxicology Working Group has made detailed recommendations for expanding the current NAHLN repertoire to include toxicology capability and capacity for response and recovery from a toxicological event in the United States. These recommendations, outlined in a White Paper of 20 May 2007, include the following.

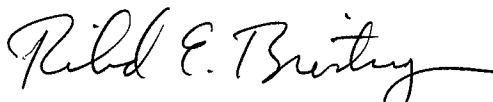
- \* Equipment Standardization
- \* Preparation of Reference Materials for Proficiency Testing
- \* Reference Standard Stockpile and Synthesis
- \* Methods Development and Validation
- \* Information Technology Support
- \* Emergency Response and Surveillance
- \* Meetings of the Working Group/Representatives of Participating Laboratories
- \* Veterinary Toxicology Residencies

The NAHLN Committee and the AAVLD strongly support the recommendations as presented in the White Paper. Unlike the situation for detecting infectious agents, there are very limited diagnostic toxicology services currently available through USDA NVSL and many of the existing NAHLN labs are downsizing, outsourcing, or eliminating their diagnostic toxicology services. As the national veterinary diagnostic toxicology infrastructure continues to decline, there is a critical need to preserve these core testing capabilities and strategically grow capabilities in order to provide immediate diagnostic toxicology assistance in disease investigations undertaken by federal Veterinary Medical Officers and Area Veterinarians in Charge. Current analytical toxicology sections of state and university-based NAHLN laboratories can only partially fill that need with existing fee for service capability. Identified gaps include the authority to send samples to NAHLN laboratories as well as funding to support diagnostic toxicology in outbreak investigations. Therefore, the NAHLN Committee with the AAVLD Executive Committee recommend that USDA and the NAHLN authorize toxicological analysis of samples collected in federal disease investigations in authorized NAHLN laboratories with existing capability, and that these laboratories be reimbursed on a fee for service basis using funds authorized either through existing CSREES Cooperative Agreements to NAHLN Laboratories or APHIS Blanket Purchase Orders.

Respectfully,



Barbara Powers, DVM, PhD  
NAHLN Committee co-chair (AAVLD)



Richard Breitmeyer, DVM, MPVM  
NAHLN Committee co-chair (USAHA)



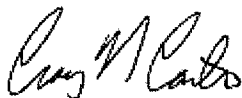
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