

Suggested Laboratory Guidelines for Animal Health Emergency Management

These guidelines were developed for laboratories as an application, expansion and clarification of the National Animal Health Emergency Management plan published in 2002 and are intended for the preparation and effective management of animal health and food security/safety emergencies by the laboratories.

A. Emergency Management Plan

Every laboratory should have a plan for responding to animal health emergencies. This should be in addition to inclusion in the respective state's emergency management plan. Plans should be easily scalable to have the appropriate depth and breadth of response for the size/complexity of the emergency.

1. The plan should include:

- a. Reference to current emerging and FAD surveillance and detection systems utilized in the laboratory.
- b. Available local, state, regional and federal laboratory resources, capacity, after hours contact numbers (i.e., including FADDL Plum Island, NVSL and regional laboratory network).
- c. A list of the laboratory's personnel resources with special skills and certifications: certified to use respirators, personal protective equipment, FAD trained laboratory diagnosticians, FAD assay trained laboratory technicians, ICS (incident command system) trained individuals, etc.
- d. Working collaborations with the State Veterinarian and other regulatory officials.
- e. Outline of the communication plan among key partners (State and Federal animal health officials, industry, and private practitioners in reference to the states' emergency management communication plan).
- f. Methods for computer system tracking and reporting of cases specifically related to the emergency including standardized geographical information systems, case definitions and nomenclature, data security and limited access to laboratories.
- g. Protocols for sample handling, chain of custody, shipping, storage and containment, disposal and disinfection and facility decontamination.
- h. Methods for accurate sample tracking including intra- and inter-

laboratory transfers.

- i. A list of all participants, their agreed upon roles and responsibilities during and preceding an emergency with particular reference to unique assignments specific to the emergency response (communications, coordinator of cases, task force liaison, quality assurance officer, trainers on SOP's, safety and disease information, critical supplies stockpiling and rotating inventory and vendors, etc).
2. The plan should be periodically evaluated to:
 - a. Compare test exercise outcomes with planned roles, responsibilities, and actions.
 - b. Compare implementation with planned actions after key events.
3. The plan should address options for redirecting or relocating routine laboratory workloads especially critical income-generating tests that do not involve the impacted species.
4. The plan should include a Recovery Response Plan for high volume serologic or other types of testing to provide evidence that the region is free of the disease following eradication. This should include facility and personnel needs, and temporary building options.

B. Written Agreements

1. There should be written agreements that detail the roles and responsibilities of the laboratory(ies) relative to the State Veterinarian's Emergency Management Plan. This should specifically address where in the incident command system (ICS) organizational chart the laboratory activities and specialist personnel fit. This should include written agreements with universities and university and state laboratories to provide specific services.
2. If the laboratory is a designated regional resource for FAD testing, written agreements need to be in place with the state and/or oversight institute on reallocation of the laboratory resources to perform FAD testing in an emergency situation. Sample tracking protocols for out-of-state samples and funding agreements with the federal government to cover this activity also need to be in place.
3. Written agreements and pre-existing protocols need to be in place for animal use and the prioritized use of specialized laboratory space (i.e. BSL-3) when needed to confirm the disease in question.
4. Written agreements need to be developed between laboratories in adjoining states

(and with adjoining states without laboratories) on the joint response to an emergency:

a. Each state should pursue cooperative agreements to be part of a larger group of laboratories to support each other in the event of an emergency. These could be with state, regional or federal, or default to the federal agency to designate a backup laboratory (regional network).

b. There should be agreements between states and within states on what declaration or event will initiate the implementation of the emergency plan.

5. Laboratories should have regional or intrastate agreements redirecting routine testing to sites other than the primary response laboratory. These agreements should include:

a. Use of in-state fee for out-of-state testing from an unaffected area of an affected state.

b. Agreement with possible drop sites for samples to be couriered elsewhere from an unaffected area within the normal circumference of operation of an affected laboratory.

c. Contingency plans should be in place for providing services for non-emergency diseases such as agreements for movement of equipment and activities from the laboratory to another site within the affected area but for non-affected species (i.e. dog and cat biopsy, clinical pathology, etc)

6. Federal and regional laboratory support agreements:

a. Written agreements with federal laboratories or approved regional laboratories to provide on-site training, initial oversight and quality control to local laboratory as it mobilizes to provide outbreak or recovery testing.

b. Written agreements with federal laboratories to provide necessary reagents if not commercially available.

7. Written agreements within the laboratory's oversight institute on issues such as facility remodeling and construction, 3rd party purchase/lease of equipment and temporary use of borrowed equipment including theft and damage coverage, fast track supply and equipment purchase agreements

8. Personnel:

a. Agreements with appropriate labor unions for immediate implementation regarding personnel: relocation, change in hours, work situation, job duties, vacation scheduling, or added personnel requirements necessary to prevent the spread of disease via laboratory personnel to their own livestock.

- b. Agreement with the University/parent organization on coverage of workman's compensation and regular benefits when staff are relocated to other states or reassigned to other agencies temporarily. Forms filled out in advance facilitate rapid deployment of short-term hire temporary federal employees.
- c. Written agreements where needed with the Federal or State Task Force releasing the laboratory of liability for non-laboratory employees such as veterinary students, non-laboratory faculty and technical staff who may assist in the laboratory during emergency situations.

C. Authorities and Policies

The legal requirements for issues such as authority, custody, transferred ownership, etc. necessary for examination and disposal of animals and animal tissues must be outlined and established.

D. Surveillance

1. Each laboratory should post the list of state and federal reportable diseases and other appropriate disease lists such as agriculture and overlap select agent lists available at

http://www.aphis.usda.gov/programs/ag_selectagent/index.html

- a. A quick reference for the collection, handling, and shipping of specimens for foreign animal disease confirmation to NVSL, or FADDL, Plum Island and for the cleaning, and disinfection of the laboratory.
- b. Protocols for reporting and confirming a suspect disease incident including working and after hours contact numbers for key personnel (regulatory and laboratory).
- c. Documented yearly training programs for faculty and staff related to foreign animal disease recognition.
- d. Biosecurity procedures and facilities for handling suspect samples and list of staff trained in use of necessary personal protective equipment.
- e. A list of laboratory staff with livestock or poultry on their personal premises, or under their care.

E. Communications

1. Identify, in conjunction with the states' emergency plan, the key contacts for each of the following:

- a. Foreign animal disease field diagnosticians in the state and region.

- b. Stakeholders i.e. representatives of industry and species groups (i.e. AASV, AABP, NAPPC, etc.), producers and private veterinarian clients.
- c. Key university/parent organization officials.
- d. State and Federal Veterinarians.
- e. NVSL.
- f. Law enforcement agencies.

2. Develop a communication plan that integrates with the Federal and state emergency management plans. Communications issues to be considered at the laboratory level include:

- a. Identification of a laboratory spokesperson and task force/agency liaison to:
 - i. interact with the taskforce and/or other involved agencies
 - ii. provide laboratory personnel and clients with current information
 - iii. keep the task force apprised of laboratory issues and urgent results
 - iv. ensure access to up-to-date materials developed by the task force
 - v. address the questions of laboratory capacity at task force meetings
- b. Provision of contact information for the task force, state or federal public information officer or web site/hot line number to answer questions from private practitioners, owners, the general public and the media who call the laboratory.
- c. Process for reporting results to the laboratory from other laboratories where samples have been sent for testing.
- d. Identification of a reporting coordinator for all cases related to the incident, if appropriate to the scale and lab functions in the emergency.

F. Training and Education

- 1. Develop an awareness and education program including:
 - a. Development of skill sets needed for emergency disease testing, utilizing endemic disease test methodologies.

- b. Implementation of yearly training of laboratory personnel on high-risk foreign animal disease recognition, sample handling, personal protection equipment and reporting of suspect cases.
- c. Completion of proficiency testing provided by NVSL on foreign animal diseases, as available.
- d. Participation in tabletop simulations.
- e. Development of regularly scheduled exercises to train participants and validate the plan.
- f. Training of one or more laboratory workers in the incident command system.

G. Funding

1. Identify the process to obtain state and federal emergency funding for laboratory functions when a state emergency is declared, and when one is not declared.
2. Identification of types of extra expenses include overtime salary, equipment and supplies, temporary facilities (building and tear down), use of mobile facilities, travel, etc.

Revision history:

Version #2- Approved by AAVLD Executive Board November 28, 2003.

Version #3 - Revised October 2004: Paragraph D section #1 revised to include APHIS site listing select agents. AAVLD President - approved changes.