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## Diagnostic Laboratory's Impact Continues to Broaden with New Testing, Partnership

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*Gary Anderson*

## Diagnostic laboratory's impact continues to broaden with new testing, partnership

For decades, Kansas State University's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory has been the go-to regional source for animal testing and diagnoses, and a national center for rabies serological testing. With recent developments it's likely to remain so for decades more.

The diagnostic lab, headed by director Gary Anderson, offers a complete range of diagnostic services for all species but primarily focuses on food-producing animals. The lab is constantly working to develop new and better tests for veterinary clients to identify, treat and prevent illness in animals.

During the last 18 months, huge accomplishments in the understanding and detection of Bovine Viral Diarrhea Virus have been made. BVDV is a common endemic disease of cattle that causes respiratory illness and reduced productivity, as well as abortion in pregnant cattle. If left undiagnosed, it can lead to economic strain due to reduced herd fertility and increased disease rates.

"We have some really ground-breaking information about BVDV that is being reported right now, and it's related to how easy it is to transmit the virus between animals," Anderson said. "New technology and tests

have been plugged into what happens every day out there in the world of cattle production.”

The lab’s findings have been shared at conferences on both U.S. coasts — in Buffalo, N.Y., and San Diego — solidifying the lab’s relevance to the national cattle industry.

The lab is also world-renowned for its rabies serological testing. It handles large volumes of rabies cases — more than 60,000 samples a year from all corners of the earth.

“The rabies lab is very productive and popular. When we find rabies in the animals that are sent here, those viruses are typed, and from there we can start identifying where the virus came from and how it relates to other infections in the region it came from,” Anderson said.

Beginning Oct. 1, nationwide commercial operations began as part of the recent alliance between Abaxis Inc. and the College of Veterinary Medicine. Abaxis is a medical products company that provides blood testing for medical and veterinary clients.

The Abaxis Veterinary Reference Laboratories in Olathe, Kan., along with the Kansas State University partnership, is the first of its kind and offers a variety of tests, some of which will be performed at the university’s diagnostic lab in Manhattan, Kan. The alliance was made to take advantage of what could potentially be an \$800-million veterinary laboratory market, according to Abaxis. More than 400 clinics nationwide have already signed up for its services.

This strategic relationship will allow Kansas State University veterinary and graduate students hands-on experience with what is one of the nation’s leaders in point-of-care blood analysis. In addition, the alliance provides direct support to the university’s clinical pathology resident training program through the Abaxis Clinical Pathology Resident Fund.

“We see the Abaxis partnership as a way to increase our exposure in the companion animal diagnostic space. It will yield material that will be useful to teach and train graduate students, as well as residents who are becoming specialists in the area of pathology,” Anderson said. “It’s also a nice opportunity for us to grow revenue for our operation, because we’ll receive royalties on their success.”

As for what’s to come, Anderson hopes to see new labs that can accommodate ever-changing diagnostic technologies and increased growth, especially as Kansas State University continues work toward becoming a top 50 public research university by 2025.

The diagnostic lab is committed to connecting with clients and other stakeholders via the newly formed outreach and field investigation program. This program focuses on investigations of complex herd disease outbreaks and provides active communications between diagnostic laboratory veterinarians with private practice experience and practitioners in the field.

“A dream of mine is to obtain the animal disease diagnostic laboratory facilities that Kansas deserves and needs for the next generation as we look to what animal and public health requirements will be in the future,” Anderson said.

*By Rachel Skybeter, Communications and Marketing*

