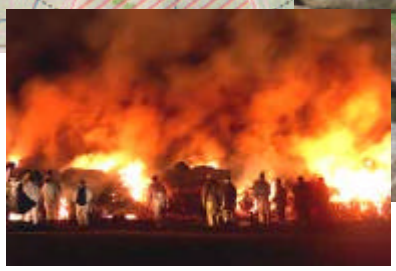
NATIONAL ANIMAL HEALTH LABORATORY NETWORK

Background

United States animal disease diagnosis and surveillance would function most effectively as a shared responsibility of publicly funded state animal health laboratories, represented by the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD), and federal animal health laboratories administered through the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). This partnership is essential for safeguarding the health and well being of our nation's livestock and poultry, companion animals, wildlife, zoo and exotic species, and for protecting the public health from diseases common to animals and humans. A national strategy, melding the nation's federal, state, and local resources, would be capable of responding to any type of animal health emergency, including bioterrorist events, newly emerging diseases, and foreign animal disease agents that threaten the nation's food supply and public health. As identified in the recent Safeguarding Review, the need to develop and maintain a state-of-the-art national animal health laboratory network (NAHLN) has never been more critical.



Foot and Mouth Disease Great Britain 2001

What are the benefits?

Animal industries, regulatory agencies, and public health would all benefit from the activities of this network. Full implementation would provide early detection of bioterrorist events; natural or intentional contamination of our food supply; animal disease outbreaks involving agents which impact human health such as anthrax and West Nile Virus; and early recognition of newly emergent and economically important diseases such as Foot and Mouth Disease and bovine spongiform encephalopathy. Importantly, the NAHLN also would strengthen current state-based laboratory testing for export of animals and live animal products, ensure that testing meets international quality standards, and enhance surveillance for diseases of international concern to expand global markets.

What is the risk?

The events of and following September 11 have dramatically emphasized a rapidly growing need for an enhanced national animal health laboratory network (NAHLN). The threat to animal agriculture posed by exotic animal diseases such as Foot and Mouth Disease; affect both animals and humans; and the heightened threat of bioterrorist agents, nearly all of which can cause devastating losses of both human and animal lives, place the nation's public health and food supply in peril.

What is needed?

The United States has responded quickly and appropriately to new public health threats by creating and funding a comprehensive public health laboratory response network coordinated through the Centers for Disease Control. A similar comprehensive, coordinated, and modernized federal and state animal health laboratory network is urgently needed to address the same emergent biological and chemical threats to animal agriculture and the security of our food supply. While the basic infrastructure of a national laboratory network is in place, critical features to rapidly address new threats are missing. These include:

- A secure communication, reporting and alert system
- Standardized, rapid diagnostic techniques that can be used at the state, regional, and national level
- Modern equipment and experienced personnel trained in the detection of emergent, foreign, and bioterrorist agents
- A national training, proficiency testing, and quality assurance system to ensure that all laboratories in the system meet quality standards

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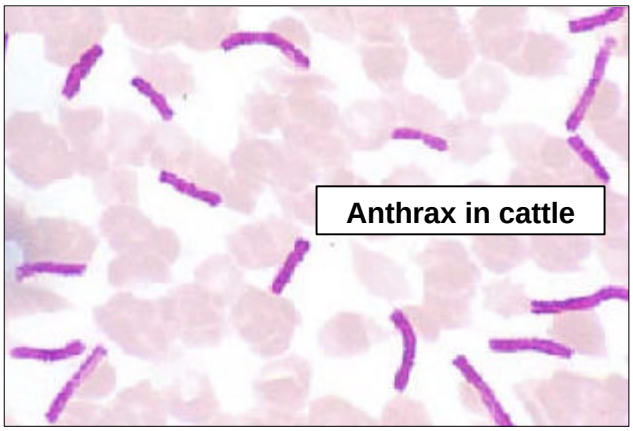
- Federal and state facility upgrades to meet biocontainment requirements
- Periodic scenario testing of the NAHLN and the associated response network

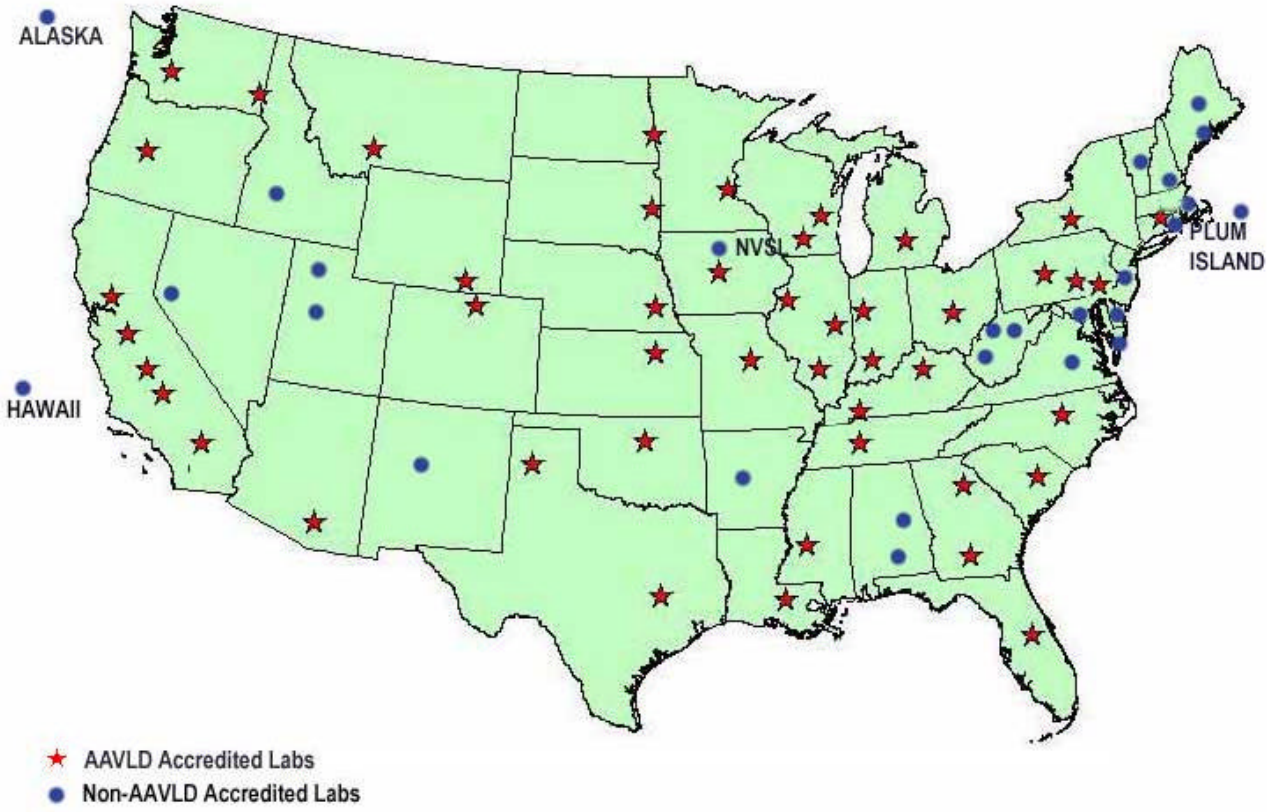


What is requested?

Federal funding to address these deficiencies is critically needed. Initial funding of $70M and continuing funding of $22M annually is requested to create and maintain an enhanced, coordinated, and modernized National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN).

Funding would be distributed to individual states through block grants to enhance state laboratory infrastructure, and to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory for network coordination. State block grants would be awarded directly to and coordinated by accredited animal disease diagnostic laboratories when such a laboratory exists in the state, or in lieu of an accredited laboratory, to the primary animal disease diagnostic laboratory within the state.

Approval of block grant funding and determination of the appropriate level of funding will be based on a laboratory application process with a limit of one application per state. Review and approval of requests for funding would be provided by a review panel to be selected by the USDA and would include state-based animal disease diagnostic experts.



NAHLN

A State and Federal Partnership to Safeguard Animal Health

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