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About VMO Observer



Vision

Mission

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Vision

To serve as a destination of choice for information, discussions, and advice about animal disease investigations.

Mission

To encourage communication among VS personnel who conduct or coordinate animal disease investigations, and to help connect those individuals with the information they need for efficient and effective animal disease surveillance and outbreak response.

What is VMO Observer?

VMO Observer is a VS 2015 Pilot Project aimed at creating a nationwide communication network for VS personnel who are responsible for conducting or coordinating animal disease investigations. Through its website and email list, VMO Observer serves as a central hub and forum for sharing and discussing case reports, diagnostic challenges, and tips and techniques for animal disease investigation. Through the VMO Observer website, and through personal and professional connections made through VMO Observer, members can share their expertise and tap into the knowledge of a large network of VS animal disease investigators. Members include VS field veterinary medical officers and epidemiologists. Site content is reviewed by a team of volunteer moderators with help from a cadre of subject matter experts.

Resources for members

A variety of electronic resources are available through VMO Observer:

- **Case Reports**
Summaries of investigations. Include photos and anecdotes to help illustrate your post.
- **SuperVMO**
Our advice column. A place for discussing problems and solutions or offering helpful suggestions for conducting investigations. Offer a tip for your colleagues, or ask them what procedures work best for them, on any topic from sample collection to packing and shipping specimens, to collaborating with stakeholders. Include photos and anecdotes to help illustrate your post.
- **What's Your Diagnosis?**
Real or hypothetical cases presented as diagnostic challenges. Post a challenge for your colleagues, or test your own diagnostic skills on a case description posted by someone else. Respond to a challenge by posting a diagnosis or differential list in the comments section. Include photos and anecdotes to help illustrate your post.
- **LabNotes**
News from diagnostic laboratories, including changes in services or procedures for testing, sampling, packaging, and shipping.
- **Comments**
VMO Observer members can comment on posts. Both posts and comments are subject to review and edit by our moderators.
- **Email digest**
A digest of moderated posts and comments to posts. The digest will be emailed every two weeks to the membership list (in the style of ProMED-mail).
- **Alerts**
Immediate email notifications of emergency animal health events.
- **Photos from the Field**
A gallery of photos on subjects ranging from disease lesions to exotic livestock, biosecurity, sampling, and personal protective equipment.
- **Surveys**

Electronic surveys and survey results. VMO Observer members are invited to participate in surveys designed to tap into their expertise and suggestions for improving animal disease surveillance and investigation procedures.

- **WikiFADI**

An electronic repository of animal disease and disease investigation information. WikiFADI is built and edited by the VMO Observer membership who can tailor it to their needs.

- **Presentations**

An electronic repository of presentations by and for VMO Observer members to use in outreach or educational activities.

Membership eligibility criteria

Any individual who meets one or more of the criteria listed below is eligible for VMO Observer membership.

- Is a VS employee who is responsible for conducting or coordinating animal disease investigations.
- Is a member of the Project Team.
- Is granted eligibility by a Project Team member.

Membership is granted at the discretion of the VMO Observer Editor, based on VMO Observer membership eligibility criteria and consideration of the extent to which membership would further the VMO Observer mission.

Members agree to read and abide by the conditions of the VMO Observer Nondisclosure Statement.

To request membership, contact any member of the [VMO Observer Project Team](#).

Project Team

- **Editor**

A VS volunteer with a background in animal health or epidemiology, project management experience, and a passion for helping VMO Observer grow.

Role: Lead the Project Team. Supervise project activities, review and adjust the project plan, evaluate options, make project-related decisions, and report to the VSMT sponsors. Select the editorial board, site administrators, and moderators.

- **Editorial Board**

VS volunteers with a background in animal health or epidemiology and a strong interest in helping VMO Observer grow.

Role: Advise the editor on VMO Observer direction, operations, and policy. Recruit moderators, subject matter experts, and posts. Advocate for VMO Observer among VS management and the VMO Observer target community. After the first term, the editorial board will select the subsequent editors.

- **Moderators**

Four to six VS volunteer foreign animal disease diagnosticians, to include representatives from both Eastern Region and Western Region, preferably with a range of length and type of experience. Moderators should have good writing and editing skills, and be enthusiastic about actively recruiting posts (with photos!) and initiating discussions. Moderators should be willing and able to spend up to 20% of duty hours on the project.

Role: Encourage submission of case reports and discussion posts, edit posts to meet rules of confidentiality and behavior, and provide background from peer-reviewed sources.

- **Site Administrators**

Two VS volunteers with website management experience or interest, and knowledge of animal disease investigations, who are willing and able to spend up to 10% of duty hours on the project.

Role: Serve as the point of contact for users of the worksite, provide status reports to editor, manage the worksite, and manage site access and list membership.

Project Team members serve one year renewable terms. For more information or to volunteer, contact any member of the [VMO Observer Project Team](#).

Sponsors and Advisors

- **VSMT sponsors**

Two members of the VS Management Team who are enthusiastic about VMO Observer and helping it succeed.

Role: Ensure that VMO Observer direction and activities are aligned with VS strategic goals. Act as a liaison between the editor and the VSMT. Provide or locate resources for the project. Help eliminate project roadblocks. Meet regularly with the editor to review project progress. Share accountability for project success.

- **Advisors**

Individuals inside or outside of APHIS who are experts in subject matter relevant to VMO Observer and who are available to comment on posts as needed.

Role: Serve as subject matter experts and be available to comment on posts as needed.

Sponsors and Advisors serve one year renewable terms. For more information or to volunteer, contact any member of the [VMO Observer Project Team](#).