FAQ’s for the Cervid Dual Path Platform (DPP) VetTB Assay® tests for bovine tuberculosis (Apr. 2014)

Q. What is the DPP test?
A. The DPP® Antibody Test is a serologic test used to test for bovine TB antibodies in captive cervids. The DPP has a higher specificity rate than TB skin tests.

Q. Which cervid species can I use the DPP test on?
A. The DPP test is approved for use in elk, red deer, white tail deer, fallow deer, and reindeer. The test is not approved for use in any other cervid species at this time.

Q. How does the performance of the DPP compare to the single cervical tuberculin skin test (SCT)?
A. The performance of the DPP is not significantly different than the single cervical test (SCT) in uninfected red deer, elk, whitetail deer, fallow deer and reindeer. The DPP appears to detect the same or a higher percentage of naturally infected elk, red deer and white-tailed deer, when compared to the SCT. There are too few naturally infected reindeer to evaluate the performance of the test in this species.

Q. Is there any benefit in using the DPP over single cervical tuberculin (SCT) skin tests?
A. The DPP is a TB test requiring only one handling event. SCT skin tests require the handling of cervids on two different occasions: one for tuberculin injection and the second for interpreting the test results.

Q. What type of sample is required for the test?
A. For each cervid tested, at least 2 ml of refrigerated serum must be submitted in a blood serum collection tube such as a red top tube. The whole blood in the original tube is allowed to clot and centrifuged so the serum can be transferred to a separately labeled clean tube. If a serum separator tube is used it also needs to be centrifuged and the serum transferred to a new clean tube.

Q. Who is authorized to collect and submit samples?
A. Only Designated Accredited Veterinarians who have received supplemental training on TB testing and the DPP testing are authorized to collect and submit samples.
Q. I am an accredited veterinarian, but have not been trained as a Designated Accredited Veterinarian. May I submit samples using the DPP test?

A. No. At this time, you must be a Designated Accredited Veterinarian who has received supplemental DPP test training in order to collect and submit samples using the DPP test on cervids.

Q. How can I become a Designated Accredited Veterinarian?

A. Contact your local APHIS Veterinary Services District office to receive information on the supplemental DPP test training and to become a Designated Accredited Veterinarian. A list of area offices can be found at: http://www.aphis.usda.gov/services/report_pest_disease/report_pest_disease.shtml.

Q. If I am a Designated Accredited Veterinarian, may I choose either the SCT skin test or the DPP test to assess the status of TB in cervids?

A. Either test may be used but the tests cannot be used in combination. However, animals that are non-negative on the DPP will be retested after 30 days with the DPP. Animals that are reactors on the SCT will be retested with the Comparative Cervical Test.

Q. Why is additional training needed if the test only involves submitting a blood sample?

A. In order to perform bTB testing of any kind (skin testing, serological testing, etc.) in cervids, a veterinarian must be knowledgeable not only in technique, but also in the regulations under the National bTB Eradication Program. Additionally, many tests that are performed must adhere to additional requirements such as for import/export and establishing and maintaining accredited cervid herds. The additional training provides this information.

Q. Can I send the serum sample to any laboratory for testing?

A. No. Serum samples must be sent to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) in Ames, Iowa. Be sure to obtain permission from the APHIS VS Assistant District Director in your State to submit the sample(s) to NVSL prior to sample shipment. Assistant District Directors can be contacted at the local APHIS VS district office.

Q. Do all States accept the DPP as an official bTB test for cervid herd accreditation and import purposes?

A. You must verify with your State or the importing State to determine if their animal health regulations allow the use of these tests as an official testing method for cervids.
Q. If I am also testing a cervid for brucellosis, may I collect one blood sample and have it tested for both bTB and brucellosis?

A. No. When also testing a cervid for brucellosis, an additional tube of whole, clotted blood must be collected and submitted to an approved brucellosis testing laboratory accompanied by a VS Form 4-33, the official brucellosis testing chart.

Q. What happens if the DPP test result is positive?

A. If the DPP test has a positive result, the animal will be subject to quarantine and a second DPP test will be performed no sooner than 30 days later.

Q. Can cervids that respond to the SCT skin test then be re-tested with the DPP?

A. No. Cervids classified as responders by testing positive on the single cervical skin test (SCT) must be retested using the comparative cervical skin test (CCT). Cervids that test positive on the primary DPP serology test must be retested using the DPP secondary serology test after 30 days. The bTB skin test and serology tests cannot be used in combination.

Q. Can accredited veterinarians or producers obtain the DPP test for their own use as an “unofficial test”?

A. No. Any tuberculosis test conducted in species under the National TB Eradication Program is an official test as defined in the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 9, Part 77. All results must be reported to State animal health officials within a specified time after the test was administered.

Q. Is specificity affected by exposure to other mycobacterial antigens known to cross-react in bovine TB tests, such as Mycobacterium avium or in herds infected with Johne’s (Mycobacterium paratuberculosis)?

A. The antibodies detected by the DPP do not cross-react to antibodies for Mycobacterium avium, M. paratuberculosis, or most environmental mycobacteria. However, M. kansasii has certain common antigens with M. bovis, therefore, animals exposed to M. kansasii may have a DPP false positive test result. The final culture results on the animals’ tissues will reveal which Mycobacteria is present. If other Mycobacteria than M. bovis are cultured, the animal is negative and cleared.

Q. May I perform the DPP test on animals that have only producer tags as identification?

A. No. Official identification recognized by APHIS must be present on each animal tested with the DPP. Identification numbers must be recorded on the VS 10-4/10-4a and VS 6-22 to correspond to the sample submitted for testing.
Q. How can I receive a DPP test kit?

A. Designated Accredited Veterinarians may submit blood samples using your own compliant shipping box using 24-hour delivery service. The US Postal Service does not deliver directly to NVSL. You may also order a DPP test kit that consists of written instructions, a VS 10-4/10-4a Laboratory Submission Form, an ice pack, and a paid shipping label to NVSL. For more information on how to order a DPP test kit or on compliant shipping boxes, please contact NVSL at (515) 337-6200 or email at NVSL_userfee@aphis.usda.gov.

Q. What is the NVSL laboratory charge to conduct the DPP test? A. Please contact NVSL at NVSL_userfee@aphis.usda.gov to receive information on current laboratory costs for the DPP test.

Q. Who will pay the fee for NVSL to run the test and how can payment be made?

A. The Designated Accredited Veterinarian submitting the sample will be responsible for test payment. This may be done by providing a credit card number on the submission form, including a check with the samples and submission form, or setting up an account with NVSL. Contact NVSL at (515) 337-6200 or nvsl_concerns@APHIS.USDA.GOV for more information.

Q. How long will it take to get results?

A. Results will be returned to the submitting Designated Accredited Veterinarian within 5 business days after samples arrival at NVSL.

Q. How will the test results be provided?

A. Test results will be provided to the submitting Designated Accredited Veterinarian by email, FAX, or mail. Veterinarians may specify preferred methods for receiving results on the submission form or when they set up their account with NVSL.