

NAHLN Tabletop Exercise Series

In 2008, the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) initiated an exercise series to examine the integral connections between field actions and laboratory response during a **highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI)** outbreak. In total, 38 exercises were conducted, involving more than 700 participants from 45 States and numerous Federal, State, and local agencies as well as the poultry industry.

Similarly, in 2010, the NAHLN conducted another exercise program, this time focusing on laboratory response during detection, ongoing operations, and recovery from a **foot-and-mouth disease (FMD)** outbreak. The second series of 16 exercises, most of which were regionally focused, involved nearly 500 personnel from 34 States and the province of British Columbia.

The features of these exercise programs—most notably, the use of a common exercise format in many different locations—enabled the NAHLN program office to analyze the animal health laboratory response system in a way that no single exercise would allow. The analysis resulted in recommendations for the coordination of animal health laboratory response capabilities across the United States that address resource management, process alignment, communication and notification, diagnostic development and validation priorities, and knowledge management strategies for the NAHLN, its laboratories, and their interface with field operations.

Overall, the establishment of the NAHLN has solved many of the testing capacity problems associated with response to a foreign animal disease outbreak. These exercise programs have helped prepare staff from NAHLN laboratories, as well as regulatory officials and field responders, for the coordination and information sharing necessary to successfully carry out the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) mission in the event that a foreign animal disease is detected in our country.

National Animal Health Laboratory Network

NAHLN, a State and Federal partnership to safeguard animal health

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United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

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APHIS 91-95-011

Issued October 2011

**National
Animal Health
Laboratory Network**

