

NAHLN Laboratory Designations

There are multiple levels of laboratory participation within the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN). The term “core laboratories” is used to designate the original 12 participating laboratories. Because participation in the NAHLN has expanded greatly since the network’s inception in 2002, it was necessary to devise a system of defining laboratory designations beyond “core laboratories” in order to communicate clearly among stakeholders.

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With this in mind, the laboratory designation system reflects different levels of infrastructure support for emergency response preparation as well as funding for surveillance testing. Laboratory participation is vital to the function and capacity of the NAHLN for early disease detection, surveillance, and surge-and-recovery testing in response to disease outbreaks. Additional infrastructure support is necessary to expand the number of participating laboratories. The goal is comprehensive coverage of the U.S. livestock industry.

How the NAHLN Laboratories Are Categorized

Four designations describe participation in the NAHLN: Core Member Laboratories, Member Laboratories, Contract Member Laboratories, and Adjunct Member Laboratories. The first three categories participate in active surveillance (fee-for-service testing) programs. However, laboratories in all four categories have successfully completed the NAHLN-approval checklist and quality assurance requirements, and each laboratory has personnel trained and proficiency-tested to conduct the approved NAHLN diagnostic assays.

A **Core Member Laboratory** receives significant infrastructure support from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and conducts fee-for-service testing for USDA. Currently, the original 12 participating laboratories in NAHLN make up this group. Their funding level enables these laboratories to be fully committed to the NAHLN mission and able to respond to domestic or foreign animal disease emergencies on a 24/7 basis.

A **Member Laboratory** receives limited annual infrastructure support from USDA for specific purposes, such as establishing information technology connections or developing capacity for data-reporting. These laboratories also conduct fee-for-service testing. Laboratories that are currently in this group could move to the Core Member category as funds become available to provide the significant annual infrastructure support needed to reach the Core Member category.

A **Contract Member Laboratory** performs only fee-for-service testing for control of specific animal diseases. These laboratories can move into either the Member or Core Member category as funding levels enable infrastructure support.

An **Adjunct Member Laboratory** is considered a member of the NAHLN because of its implementation of NAHLN protocols, but its primary mission is not domestic animal disease diagnostic work within the United States.

National Animal Health Laboratory Network

NAHLN, a State and Federal partnership to safeguard animal health

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