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Veterinary Services Centers: Providing International Leadership

Introduction

At the international level, the Veterinary Services (VS) program of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) collaborates extensively with the World Organization for Animal Health. This Paris-based organization changed its name recently but still uses its former acronym—OIE. Currently, 178 OIE member countries work together to collect, analyze, and disseminate information on the distribution and occurrence of animal diseases; to provide expertise and encourage international harmonization in the control of animal diseases; and to safeguard world trade by publishing international standards for the safe movement of animals and animal products.

Within APHIS-VS, three major program areas interact directly with OIE: the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL), the Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB), and the Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health (CEAH).

NVSL and CVB—together with the Institute for International Cooperation in Animal Biologics (IICAB)—make up the Collaborating Centre for the Diagnosis of Animal Diseases and Vaccine Evaluation in the Americas.





Collaborating Centre for the Diagnosis of Animal Diseases and Vaccine Evaluation in the Americas

This OIE-recognized Centre is made up of three components—NVSL, CVB, and IICAB. Together, they work to develop and deliver multiyear continuing education to U.S. veterinarians, personnel at State veterinary diagnostic laboratories, and U.S. and international biologics regulators and manufacturers. In the event of an exotic animal disease outbreak, this additional training better prepares these individuals to diagnose and respond to the disease. It also prepares the United States to safely trade veterinary vaccines and other biologics needed for disease response and control worldwide.

National Veterinary Services Laboratories: An OIE Reference Laboratory

NVSL—a full-service veterinary diagnostic laboratory—is recognized by OIE as an international reference laboratory for specific animal diseases of importance to the Americas. These include high-pathogenicity avian influenza, anthrax, pseudorabies, bluetongue, contagious equine metritis, equine encephalomyelitis (eastern, western, and Venezuelan), equine infectious anemia, foot-and-mouth disease, leptospirosis, Newcastle disease, swine influenza, vesicular stomatitis, and West Nile encephalitis.

NVSL supports OIE by:

- Providing diagnostic assistance,
- Supplying reference reagents to other laboratories,
- Evaluating diagnostic reagents used by other countries,
- Consulting on a wide range of techniques, and
- Conducting developmental projects to improve diagnostic techniques.

Center for Veterinary Biologics

CVB is the sole confirmatory and investigatory testing laboratory involved in regulation of commercial veterinary biologics (vaccines and diagnostic kits) in the United States.

CVB supports OIE by:

- Developing, distributing, and using worldwide standard protocols for biologics evaluation and training scientists throughout the world on these protocols;
- Validating and providing standard reagents to biologics manufacturers and regulatory laboratories worldwide;
- Conducting developmental projects to improve biological techniques for diseases of significance in the Americas;
- Reviewing, developing, comparing, and harmonizing testing protocols in collaboration with industry and other governmental laboratories;
- Actively participating in international harmonization initiatives aimed at improving standards and testing procedures for veterinary biologics; and
- Hosting scientific meetings in the area of veterinary biologics.

Institute for International Cooperation in Animal Biologics

IICAB is based at Iowa State University and concentrates its efforts on continuing education, a comprehensive Web site that contains animal disease information, and the harmonization of veterinary biologics regulations through communication and information sharing. The Institute also works to improve the availability, safety, efficacy, and use of veterinary biologics.

Specifically, IICAB:

- Offers training on scientific principles behind vaccine safety and efficacy and organizes scientific meetings;
- Hosts a comprehensive English/Spanish language Web site featuring animal disease information and other resources;
- Maintains a Web-based compendium of vaccines for transboundary animal diseases; and
- Helps developing countries obtain veterinary biologics for specific unmet needs and helps in their efforts to manufacture, import, and regulate veterinary biologics and diagnostics.

The Centers for Epidemiology and Animal Health: An OIE Collaborating Centre

As the OIE Collaborating Centre for Animal Disease Surveillance Systems, Risk Analysis, and Epidemiologic Modeling, CEAH shares analytical expertise with other OIE member countries. Through international trainings, consultation, and collaborative analysis projects, CEAH assists in the global effort to increase veterinary capacity while promoting a better international understanding of the science that supports VS' policies.

