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National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN)

Korea is currently dealing with an outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD), a highly contagious viral infection of agricultural animals. Depopulation of infected and exposed animals forms the basis of control of FMD. Add to this the refusal by FMD-free countries to accept import of animal products originating from an affected region, and the devastating economic impacts for countries facing an outbreak become readily apparent.

By our location on the Pacific Rim and our busy port traffic, Oregon is particularly vulnerable to the possible spread of FMD from the Korean outbreak. Dr. Don Hansen, Oregon's State Veterinarian, is working hard to increase the public's awareness of this situation. Of particular concern are returning visitors and military service personnel who might have been on affected premises in Korea and could unknowingly bring the virus to Oregon. Introduction of the FMD virus to Oregon would be disastrous to our economy.

Time is crucial to the effective control of an outbreak of FMD or any other foreign animal disease. Diagnosis, quarantine, depopulation, and surveillance cannot be delayed. As a member of the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN), the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory plays a critical and time sensitive role in Oregon's preparedness for an outbreak of FMD. The NAHLN, established by the USDA in cooperation with the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians, is a network of state/university laboratories distributed across the country that not only perform routine diagnostic testing for endemic diseases, but are also approved by USDA to conduct surveillance and response testing for foreign animal diseases, such as FMD, Classical Swine Fever, Exotic Newcastle Disease, and Avian Influenza. As such, they are able to support the diagnostic services of the USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Plum Island, New York and Ames, Iowa, at the state level. The geographic accessibility of these laboratories shortens the time to confirmation of FMD infection, allowing our state and federal veterinarians to respond in the timeliest manner.

NAHLN laboratories use standardized testing methods developed by USDA for use at state, regional, and national levels. Personnel from the laboratories have been specifically trained in these techniques, and undergo stringent proficiency testing by the USDA. The laboratories are tied together by a common software platform that allows reporting of test results quickly and accurately under secure conditions. A robust quality control system is in place at all NAHLN laboratories.

With these resources, the NAHLN labs have the capacity to test large numbers of samples during a disease outbreak as well as to demonstrate freedom of disease after eradication. In addition, the labs can conduct nationwide surveillance testing for early detection of animal disease outbreaks.

Through our participation in the NAHLN, the VDL is helping to safe guard the health of our agricultural animals. The impact extends into the public health arena as well as we consider the zoonotic potential of avian influenza. Furthermore, this work serves to promote confidence among the public, as well as our global trading partners, in our nation's animal products and food supply.

For more information about the NAHLN please visit the [National Animal Health Laboratory Network](#)

More information about Foot and Mouth Disease and the risk to Oregon agriculture can be found at the [Oregon Department of Agriculture Animal Health and Identification Division](#)

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