

DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK  
DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORY DIVISION



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To: Economic Affairs Interim Committee

From: Dr. A. W. Layton, Director, Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory

Re: Importance of maintaining AAVLD accreditation

An accreditation body determines or establishes standards considered essential by the members of that profession and assures compliance in adhering to these standards by conducting periodic and independent inspections of the accredited institution. A diagnostic laboratory review process analyzes the institution's quality programs and policies, personnel qualifications, facilities, the quality and reproducibility of their product and customer service and satisfaction. A formal analysis summarizes how well the institution is meeting these professional standards and provides comparison to other like institutions. Strengths and weaknesses are identified by the inspection and the accreditation body usually issues recommendations or requirements to the inspected institution that guarantee compliance with the accreditation standards. Put simply, accreditation review is an independent, competency audit. Obtaining accreditation by an independent, professionally recognized organization has become common place for many institutions and is now essential for all areas of the medical profession.

The Montana Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (MVDL) is the only full service veterinary diagnostic laboratory in the state of Montana and is provisionally accredited by the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD). The AAVLD is a renowned accreditation body for veterinary diagnostic laboratories with 42 non-commercial laboratory systems being accredited in the United States and Canada and the majority of these laboratories are affiliated with veterinary colleges.

The Montana livestock industry predominantly exports cattle to other states and countries and most of the tests performed at the MVDL allow for the movement of livestock and/or their products. All states and countries frequently require import surveillance testing to minimize the potential of disease introduction. Importers demand that test results be accurate and most will only accept results from accredited laboratories. After Montana's brucellosis status was downgraded, the MVDL performed over 194,000 brucellosis tests to meet importation requirements placed upon the Montana cattle industry in order to continue to sell and move animals and their products. The Montana cattle industry could not have continued business if confidence in the test results was at issue. In addition, the fact that the MVDL was accredited by the AAVLD proved to be a significant piece of information that was considered by the USDA in 2009 upon reinstating Montana's Brucellosis-free status. For the foreseeable future, the MVDL will continue to play an active roll in providing the livestock industry the required testing procedures that permit the sale and movement of the industry's product.

AAVLD accreditation validates the personnel competence and the testing procedures conducted by the MVDL. Being an accredited laboratory assures the public, veterinary and medical professionals, and state and international regulatory officials that the MVDL meets national and international laboratory standards of practice. If not for this independent evaluation, confidence in test results would rely solely on the assertions of the laboratory administration.