



July 14, 2014

Member Survey Regarding Diagnostic Lab

Summary:

The Montana Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA) is a statewide organization composed of veterinarians from across the state. Recently, the Executive Board of MVMA met and discussed the situation involving the budget shortfalls at the Montana Department of Livestock (MDOL) and the State Diagnostic Lab which they oversee. As a result of the issues being raised about the Diagnostic Lab, the MVMA board did a brief survey of members who attended the association's annual summer meeting on June 29 to July 1 in Missoula. Below are the results and comments we received.

Questions:

1. Do you find the State Diagnostic Lab provides you with timely results?

18 Yes

2 No

Comments:

1. Clinical. Pathology; biopsy/histopath
2. Don't use it much but they have been timely when I do.
3. Although I have only sent one animal to the lab from the UM (a research rodent)
4. Usually
5. Slow turnaround compared to private labs
6. Culture and sensitivity seems longer but when email provided they give updates soon.
7. Too slow in cytology / histopath results so don't use anymore.
8. Good for serology that they do in lab. Some cytology / histology take too long or if they have to send out to other labs. Also need to fax/email preliminary results.
9. The lab is good veterinary regulatory testing. Sometimes diagnostic testing can get slowed down by seasonal rush.
10. Lab not only provided timely results, it makes every effort to inform practitioners how to procure and ship samples to maximize efficiency and minimize delays.
11. I use them almost exclusively for EIA – GIO testing and salmonella pullorum testing.

12. Their results for Coggins, PCR for Trich and brucellosis are timely. Usually chemistry panels are normally timely. I do not send abortion screens or histopathology to the MT Dx lab because of delays in the past.

2. Do you find the State Diagnostic Lab provides quality results?

18 Yes

5 No

Comments:

1. The report was comprehensive and I appreciate the phone call from the pathologist.
2. On certain things, sometimes we question the quality of the results.
3. Lack definitive dx in many cases.
4. Clinpath – no complaints. Histopath may be an issue as well as trich PCR. Has had credibility issues in the past.
5. Lack of clinical pathologist leaves huge gap in quality of interpretation of results.
6. Serology for regulatory medicine good.
7. Serology, CB/Profile, Trace mineral? – Yes. Sometimes pathology work is not as good.
8. For 20 years as a practice owner I used Antech / Idexx with very good results and customer service. After I sold the practice I am now working with practice that almost exclusively used MDOL. I have been disappointed with histopath results (questioned many of them) and not impressed with pathologists when consulting. Also don't do manual CBC counts.
9. And provides opportunity / communication to offer further diagnostics.
10. I have found them very valuable
11. Routine tests as listed above are reliable. I have had trouble with CAE/OPP tests and abortion screens, histopathology.

3. How do you rate the State Diagnostic Lab results when compared to results provided by other laboratories you have used?

2 Results above other labs

7 Results below other labs

11 Similar to other labs

Comments:

1. Compared to WAPDL and WSU
2. I would have to say the performance has varied over the last 30 years.
3. Clin. path has no problems and is timely and accurate. Histopath could be more credible and consultants are appreciated. Trich is hit or miss.
4. Pathology results of variable quality
5. We use university labs for more difficult pathology cases.
6. Excellent communication and personal attention.
7. I used a lab in Washington for a bull and a flock of goats – same results but ours was faster.

8. Again, trustworthy for routine work, not as much for more complicated testing requiring more interpretation.
9. Generally don't use other labs – only Shobe at Lewistown for ETAs.

4. *What services do you most value that is being provided by the State Diagnostic Lab?*

1. Pathology – it's reasonable and very accurate for blood work and prepaid marks would up my usage.
2. Complete diagnostic pathology service.
3. Serology, pathology
4. Histopathology
5. Coggins
6. Brucellosis, Coggins, PCR
7. Histopath – livestock disease diagnosis and surveillance.
8. Public health – zoonotic surveillance (w/ FWP and DPHHS). Regulatory current and future testing as a NAHLN / AAVLD lab (Brucellosis, PEDV / AV-Inflow, WNV, etc.). Timely turnaround.
9. Regulatory (Brucellosis / Trich testing) only
10. Certain blood panels
11. Food animal and horse serology
12. Timely regulatory testing, CBC/Profile, abortion work-ups, rabies and neurology testing
13. C/S (culture & sensitivity) primarily. Most of clinic would probably say blood work, histo, C/S, necropsy (lg animal).
14. Provides information /suggestions pertinent to Montana practitioners.
15. Serologic, necropsy, bacteriology, clinical pathology
16. Blood testing – Bangs, Coggins, etc. Pathology on livestock.
17. Brucellosis testing. PCR testing for Tritrichomonas in bulls. Coggins testing.
18. Histology PCR- Trich, rabies
19. Histopathology, PCR-Trich, rabies check, serology
20. Consultation to discuss lab finding and even enhance the rule/out list.

5. *Would your practice be significantly impacted if the State Diagnostic Lab went away?*

14 Yes
1 No

Comments:

1. NA as I'm not in private practice currently
2. It seems to be important to have an instate lab. Was better when postal service was consistent overnight.
3. Yes, I am in the DSA and without the ability to obtain timely results for brucellosis, the quarantine costs would be extensive.
4. Maybe – I am in DSA so do a significant amount of brucellosis testing.
5. Very hard to include lists of things that have been ruled out and what other samples are needed to enhance diagnosis.
6. Practice owner uses almost exclusively because of cost. Doesn't have good fed ex service for other labs so mail works for clinic better. She does a lot of large animal work so would impact her significantly.
7. Not currently in active practice – but if I was, yes.
8. I could sue a different lab but I'm used to the state lab turnaround time and appreciate the link to the state vet's office.

9. Turn around as CSU lab is good. I would send more testing there.

6. What can the State Diagnostic Lab do better in your opinion?

- a. In presidential election years, the lab closes for elections, veteran's day and Thanksgiving. It is difficult to get timely results. You can't do that for veterinarians who work 2 out of the 3 days.
- b. Focus on the areas that can be done at the highest level of performance – it can be very important to receive accurate results the first time.
- c. Make a call on the Dx, don't waffle
- d. Timely results
- e. Quick turnaround
- f. Better management for cost effectiveness of each test run. Increase price to cover those or don't run if can't be competitive. More user friendly less lab close ups during state holidays (industry works 7 days – shouldn't lab run at least 5? More PR and stakeholder involvement and oversight. Need to increase credibility significantly. Don't let industry remove this great resource from us.
- g. Separate from DOL – “old school” mentality that hinders future of lab – i.e. service small animal/equine better may lead to more sustainable income generation.
- h. Quality of pathology reports
- i. Get different pathologists, be more professional on phone, do manuals on all CRSC's and note any pathology (platelet clumping, etc.).
- j. B. ovis testing more timely. Be more attentive for lab work that involves more interaction between the pathologist and practitioner.

7. Do you feel the state of Montana would be significantly impacted if the lab was closed?

17 Yes

2 No

Comments:

1. Timely results are important.
2. Very likely it would be detrimental to statewide practices.
3. Not sure – it may be that it is a hardship – have the need for high quality in state, if not feasible, then closing may be the best alternative. Top performance would help ensure better usage.
4. Due to the increase in the size of the DSA and the expansion of brucellosis in Montana.
5. I would not be seriously impacted but others probably would be
6. Sending samples out requires more paperwork and more time.
7. Yes and No. Timeliness of brucellosis testing and PCR testing in bulls for Trich are important. Otherwise, not much impact.
8. The people at the lab are familiar with what's going on in Montana. Their input on a case can be insightful.

8. Do you feel that the lab provides a needed public health role?

17 Yes

2 No

Comments:

1. The ability to have the lab in place during crisis, emergencies, outbreaks cannot be underestimated.
2. Surveillance for lepto, salmonella, anthrax, rabies, Q fever plague.
3. Brucellosis testing, rabies testing
4. Can't comment
5. Very helpful to me in past when faced with public health concerns.
6. They get results and immediately start communicating with other office.
7. Possibly. Timely testing. I do send rabies suspects to the Bozeman laboratory.

9. Other comments:

1. To go to other labs, it takes longer to get samples there and may cost quite a bit more for postage.
2. In my opinion with the brucellosis surveillance and trick the regulatory role of the state lab can NOT be replaced.
3. Need to run it like a business. Accountability. Peer / industry committee oversight. MSU should take it over on general revenue funding plus research component plus teaching for the new 1 + 3 veterinary co-op school at MSU.
4. I have been using the state lab for a long time and feel it has lost its edge on being up to date and new technologies.
5. Don't close the lab – improve it. Did they pass their accreditation?
6. Cost effective but if clinic had clients that would / could pay higher fees (doesn't), would prefer using other labs just not practical with this practice.
7. Please don't close lab. I feel they fill a vital role.
8. 40 years the lab primarily served livestock and horse producers. Aside from rabies, they did not do much for companion animals. They should consider returning to that original concept and not try to be everything for everyone.
9. With better shipping options like UPS and Fed Ex, laboratories in neighboring states may be able to provide the needed testing. Another possibility may be to provide those limited tests needed, decreasing need for staff and reagents. Is SA testing valuable for the lab or is the expense of reagents outstripping the income? Some questions.

A state operated lab has more credibility as to the reporting of various test results. Credibility also goes with long-term existence as a diagnostic laboratory.