



May 12, 2021

**Joint Subcommittee on Education – Ways & Means**

**Senate Bill 5528: Support for the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory**

Dear Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair McLain, and Committee Members:

Governor Kate Brown has proposed moving current State funding of the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (OVDL) into the “State Programs” budget of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission. While we support this move and ongoing funding for the OVDL, we don’t know how familiar you might be with the OVDL and the vital services it provides to veterinarians and across Oregon. Thus, this introduction.

The OVDL is based in Corvallis at Oregon State University. It is a full-service, nationally-accredited laboratory, with essential diagnostic services accessible to the approximate 550 veterinary facilities in our state as well as additional clinics throughout the region. The service is high-quality, and we in the profession rely on the expertise of the OVDL’s bacteriologists, pathologists, virologists, and other support staff to help us identify the illnesses and disease conditions we are encountering in our animal patients so that we can provide the most appropriate treatment protocols for the patients in our care. Following are several examples of how the OVDL meets the broad needs of veterinarians in Oregon:

- Pet veterinarians, and nonprofits like the Oregon Humane Society, access the Laboratory for essential diagnostic services, including cytology and histopathology testing, screenings for infectious diseases, and necropsies. There are commercial labs available for similar services, and they are good at what they do, but unlike the Diagnostic Laboratory, they aren’t accredited by the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians, and they don’t provide the same top-shelf level of service.

Veterinarians in equine and food production practice also access the OVDL for the same range of diagnostic services – for health support of our livestock industry, which includes beef and dairy cattle, horses, sheep, goat, llamas, etc. Service is same-day or two-day, which is critical for those of us engaged in these disciplines of veterinary medicine; no other veterinary laboratory in the state matches the same level of service and expedient turnaround.

- This past fall, a veterinarian in Polk County was perplexed when a client’s large and valuable herd of goats started aborting and dying. With the expertise and counsel of the OVDL’s bacteriologists and pathologists, they were able to figure out that bacteria that occasionally infects goat herds likely had been spread by Canada Geese at a nearby wildlife refuge. Together they developed a course of action to address the outbreak and treat the herd, saving all but a few of the goats.
- The OVDL helped a veterinarian in Jackson County with diagnosis of specific disease conditions in cattle, which has led to this practitioner developing a program for disease prevention in his large animal patients. By preventing disease in the cattle herd, the use of antimicrobials has been minimized. In this context, the OVDL is helping to keep antibiotics out of the food chain and helping to decrease antimicrobial resistance in human medicine.

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Some of the OVDL's other service outreach (with veterinarian engagement) includes:

- Partnership with federal and state agencies on disease surveillance programs – diseases of concerns for outbreaks of national and international importance: Avian Influenza, Newcastle Disease, and Foot and Mouth Disease. Any of these noted illnesses and disease, if not identified and contained right away, would have a devastating impact on Oregon's livestock industry.
- Aquatic fishery facilities – plus the Laboratory's service support for the Hatfield Marine Science Center in Newport. This is a distinguished research and education facility, operated by Oregon State University, in cooperation with five federal and state agencies.
- Veterinary Teaching Hospital with the Carlson College of Veterinary Medicine – this includes services to pet owners and also the important diagnostic support which is part of a veterinary student's education and training. The Laboratory is also a vital resource for residents and scientists with the veterinary program.
- Public health agencies – Oregon Health Authority. The Laboratory's engagement with and service to Oregonians via public health is critical but likely relatively unknown and unrecognized. The Diagnostic Lab performs tests on zoonotic pathogens – diseases that are transmissible from animals to humans – such as Rabies and West Nile Virus, and this past year the Lab really stepped up when it started testing for COVID-19 in humans.

These broad-range and robust services have a cost. And viable funding for the OVDL is imperative for the facility being able to continue to meet the demands for these services – and for it to meet the requirements and standards for its national accreditation. Any setback likely would lead to a significant reduction from the OVDL's current level of support and service to our veterinary community – and, ultimately, to livestock producers and pet owners across Oregon.

That's why the Oregon Veterinary Medical Association is asking for your full funding support for the Oregon Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

*Heidi*

Heidi Houchen, DVM, President