

# ACCREDITATION

The independent evaluation of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs) against recognized conformity assessment standards to ascertain their integrity, impartiality, objectivity and competence to carry out specific conformity assessment activities.



## VETERINARY LABORATORY ACCREDITATION

Countries around the world have national veterinary services to add the various needs of animal health protection and food safety. An integral part of these organizations is the veterinary laboratory diagnostic laboratories. Surveillance and diagnosis of clinical cases of animal disease are necessary to determine the existence or introduction of a disease and laboratory testing is a crucial part of these surveillance programmes. Therefore, diagnostic laboratories are the backbone of disease control programmes administered by veterinary services of a country.

The free circulation of animals and animal products in international trade has its repercussions in the animal health field, and veterinary diagnostic laboratories have always played a significant role in this arena. Recent agreements for the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement), the creation of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and several resolutions of the International Committee and Regional Commissions of the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) (26, 28, 31, 34) testify to the major changes which have already taken place and, very likely, will take place in the future in international veterinary policy.

### Roles of veterinary diagnostic laboratories

#### a. Foreign animal disease diagnosis

This is generally a function of the national veterinary diagnostic laboratory. Many of such laboratories have biosafety levels (containment levels), which allow them to work with high contagious or controlled agents such as foot and mouth virus

#### b. Surveillance

One of the integral functions of the Department of veterinary services of a country is disease surveillance, both active and passive. This is specified in the OIE (world organization for animal health) which states that a country can only be considered free of a disease if that country has a surveillance programme for that disease. OIE surveillance requirements carry important trade implication, as the OIE was designated in the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement of the world trade organization as the standard- setting organization for animal health. Passive disease surveillance generally involves taking receipt of clinically affected animals and/ or tissues to determine the cause. Testing for active surveillance programmes requires the establishment of protocols and personnel dedicated to processing a large volume of sample.

### C. Export testing

The code specific testing requirements which must be met to import animals and animal products into disease-free countries. Most requirements include diagnostic tests. National and state veterinary diagnostic laboratories are involved in performing this export testing, as well as other testing to qualify animals' for movement.

In these countries where testing is performed by state or regional laboratories, a quality assurance programme must be administered, these programmes generally include use of standard protocols and the issuing of laboratory approvals based on proficiency panel. In addition, state, regional and private laboratories must follow test protocols outlined by OIE manual.



### Quality Assurance of Veterinary Laboratories

Valid laboratory results are essential for diagnosis, surveillance and trade. Such results are achieved by the use of good management practices, valid test and calibration methods, proper technique, quality control and quality assurance, all working together within a quality management system. Laboratory quality management includes technical, managerial and operational elements of testing and the interpretation of test results.

A quality management system enables the laboratory to demonstrate both competency and an ability to generate consistent technically valid results that meet the needs of its customers. The need for mutual recognition of test results for international trade and the acceptance of international standards such as ISO/IEC 17025:2005 General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration Laboratories that require good laboratory quality management systems.

The OIE has published a detailed standard on this subject (OIE 2008).

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