



The four veterinarians who work at the state Veterinary Laboratory in Harrisburg sit together at a five-viewer microscope. From the left are Graham Purchase, administrative director of the laboratory; Dr. Donald Singletary, poultry pathologist; Dr. Mark Walter, chief pathologist; and Dr. Hyun Kim, immuno/histo-chemistry specialist.



With brother Ron working in the background, Kathy Lewellen sets up some horse serum test tubes in the virology testing lab.

Veterinary Laboratory Is Strong Defense

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tem truly can function as a unified force.

In this sense, the whole is proving to be much greater than the sum of the parts.

As an example, Penn State has one of the most extensive, if not the most extensive, reference collections of E. coli bacteria in the world.

That means, that should an animal or animal tissue be sent to PDA or the University of Pennsylvania for testing, that any case that seems to indicate a different or unknown variety of E. coli can be sent to Penn State and worked on quickly.

In comparison, if such a resource were held not by Penn State, but some other research entity in another part of the world, it would add to the time, cost and increased risk associated with delays in determining the identity of the E. coli, and whether it has a documented history in literature that may be of help in understanding or diagnosing a problem.

Further, since the three labs are spread out, and they are linked so cooperatively, each lab can serve local veterinarians and animal health officials, and provide inhouse expertise as well as expertise from the other two laboratories.

In other words, the cooperative venture provides almost the entire state's agricultural community with equal access to top-level diagnostic technology and disease testing.

According to Graham Purchase, veterinarian and director of the PDA Diagnostic Laboratory, the tripartite system is working well, and the new state laboratory is exciting in its operations and development.

According to Purchase, the design of the laboratory was done with foresight.

For example, it has a specialized high-level biosecurity laboratory for handling suspect and known materials that are deadly and contagious.

That lab is designed so that, when operational as a high-biosecurity area, anyone entering has to disrobe, shower and dress in protective clothing before entering the laboratory, and repeat the process to leave the lab.

While the laboratory hasn't yet had the need to utilize that setup, the lab is being used in the meantime to conduct testing and research with far less worrisome materials.

However, should some case arise where highly pathogenic and contagious activity is suspect, the lab could be quickly set up and put into use for the top level biosecurity for which it was designed.

As it is, the biosecurity at the laboratory is strict. It has to be, in order to conform to acceptable scientific community standards of operation.

The front entrance lobby is as far as anyone gets without being cleared and lab-coated and escorted.

There is a biosecurity cart in the lobby where any materials or samples brought in and can be quickly contained and isolated.

The loading dock is where the materials and sometimes whole animal carcasses are brought for receiving.

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