

Career Opportunities

Most of NVSL's full-time career positions are for veterinary medical officers, microbiologists, chemists, biological science laboratory technicians, and animal caretakers. Various other administrative, professional, and technical positions and many student opportunities and summer internships are also available.



A technician at the Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory performs particle testing of a foot-and-mouth disease vaccine antigen concentrate.

For additional information regarding employment opportunities, please visit <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov> on the Web. Under location search, choose "IA-Ames" from the location search selections. If you are interested in applying for a specific APHIS job you find listed there, please contact Human Resources at (515) 663-7266.

Contact Information

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Web site for all of NVSL:
<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/nvsl>



United States Department of Agriculture
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

National Veterinary Services Laboratories: An Overview

Program Aid No. 1840

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Protecting America's Livestock

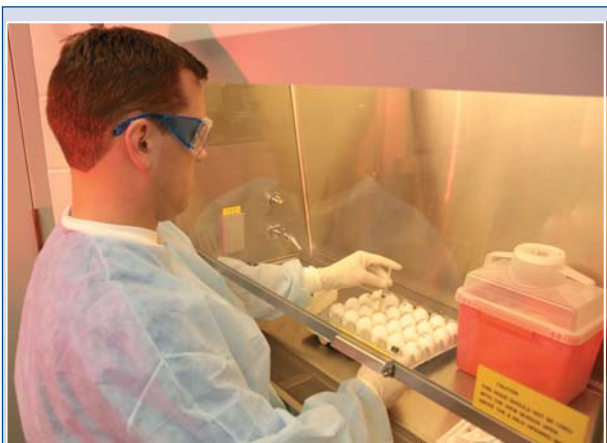
The National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) serves as a national reference laboratory, providing other diagnostic laboratories with animal disease information and technical guidance and support. NVSL also performs laboratory testing for the Veterinary Services (VS) unit of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS).

The origins of the NVSL can be traced back to USDA's Bureau of Animal Industry (the predecessor agency of APHIS). Currently, NVSL is the only Federal facility engaged in the diagnosis of both domestic and foreign animal diseases.

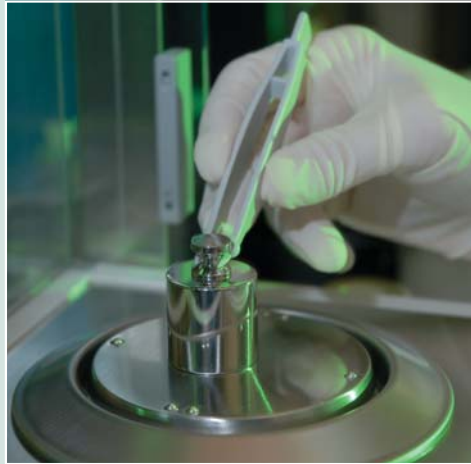
In 1 year, NVSL personnel process around 70,000 diagnostic sample submissions, ship 131,000 vials of reagents, and provide 1,500 days of training. NVSL personnel also certify about 1,300 assays conducted by other laboratories. NVSL technicians also perform assays that are specific for more than 245 domestic diseases and 30 exotic animal diseases.

Accomplishing Our Mission

NVSL employees provide analytical services, disseminate scientific information, conduct developmental activities, and provide training in diagnostic techniques for State, private, and international laboratory personnel as well as for APHIS employees.



A technician in the Diagnostic Virology Laboratory inoculates eggs with a diagnostic sample.



Specialists in the Engineering and Facilities Management Services unit calibrate scales like this one to ensure accuracy in all measurements.

All this work is done by a professional staff of almost 350 in 4 testing departments—the Diagnostic Bacteriology Laboratory, the Pathobiology Laboratory, the Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (FADDL), and the Diagnostic Virology Laboratory—as well as 3 support units. Behind-the-scenes support includes Information Resource Management Services, Engineering and Facilities Management Services, and Administrative Management and Program Services. All departments are located in Ames, IA, except FADDL, which is located on Plum Island, off the coast of Long Island, NY.

NVSL personnel work closely with the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) to provide consultation, reagents, and training for foreign countries and serve as the reference laboratory for the National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN). NVSL clients and stakeholders include private, State, Federal, university, and other groups, both domestic and international.

Safeguarding U.S. Animal Health

The NVSL safeguards U.S. animal health and contributes to public health by ensuring that timely and accurate laboratory support is provided by a nationwide animal-health diagnostic system. NVSL personnel accomplish this through

- Providing diagnostic services, reagents, and training in world-class facilities;
- Preparing for and responding to animal health emergencies and emerging threats;



NVSL pathologists examine thousands of samples of brain tissue annually, looking for indications of the presence of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or “mad cow disease,” in cattle that displayed signs of central nervous system illness at slaughter.

- Taking an active role in the leadership of the NAHLN;
- Serving as an international reference laboratory, and
- Maintaining a well-trained and responsive staff.

In the Future

NVSL specialists are continually developing new assays to meet the national needs for animal health care. NVSL employees collaborate with workers at VS' Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB), which conducts biological product evaluations, and with workers at the National Animal Disease Center (NADC), a USDA research facility.

NVSL, CVB, and NADC will move together into a single complex called the National Centers for Animal Health (NCAH). This move creates a strong synergy to meet the ever-changing national needs for animal health. When in the combined facilities, the three groups will also increase operational efficiency due to their close proximity and shared infrastructure.

As the reference laboratory for the NAHLN, NVSL will continue to support the growth of the Federal-State laboratory network over the years to come. Laboratory capacity for animal disease surveillance and emergency response will increase, focusing on improved geographic access to laboratory services and a broader number of diseases covered using common testing platforms.