The ICLN Portal is a secure, access-protected web portal that promotes communication and coordination among ICLN member networks and serves as a secure, online incident command center for conducting virtual meetings; sending and receiving alerts, emails and situation reports; and saving pertinent documents for response activities.

Hosted on the ICLN Portal, the Data Exchange Utility (DEU) is an information technology infrastructure that supports the exchange of laboratory results data. The DEU converts data presented by laboratory networks in their own “native” format into a common ICLN data format. Stay tuned for more information on the DEU in the next issue of the ICLN newsletter.

ICLN member networks, such as NAHLN, FERN, and Vet-LIRN, are members of the One Health Federal Interagency COVID-19 Coordination Group (OH-FICC) and activities conducted within the group were essential during the pandemic to apply a One Health approach to COVID-19. The CDC One Health Office created and coordinates the OH-FICC, which brings together representatives from more than 20 federal agencies from multiple departments to share updates and exchange information. The OH-FICC includes a subgroup on animal diagnostics and testing, bringing together relevant partners to address scientific developments regarding animal diagnostics for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The group also monitors the level of SARS-CoV-2 animal testing in the United States and makes recommendations related to animal testing and diagnostics to inform public health guidance.

OH-FICC led efforts to improve the understanding of how connections between people, animals (companion, livestock, and other production animals and wildlife including free-ranging and captive), and the environment might affect the spread of this emerging zoonotic disease. Fighting emerging infectious disease threats such as COVID-19 requires strong collaboration with partners across the human, animal, and environmental health spectrum.

Collaborative efforts of OH-FICC and ICLN member networks during the COVID-19 pandemic have included the following:

- Surveillance and testing of SARS-CoV-2 in animals, including sample collection and sequence analysis to identify transmission pathways and genetic variations. [CDC, USDA-NVSL-NAHLN and Vet-LIRN]
Radiological Laboratory Subgroup

The Radiological Laboratory Subgroup (RLS) focuses on increasing laboratory efficiency and collaborations across federal radiological network laboratory programs. The subgroup identifies and proposes solutions to laboratory gaps among the ICLN radiological laboratories.

The RLS has developed a document for laboratory managers that highlights unique resources whose availability could be limited during a major radiological or nuclear response. Unique resources are defined as those that have limited availability, are available from only a single or limited number of vendors, and have long lead times for acquisition. A second document for senior managers and administrators regarding radiological unique resources was developed. Both of these documents are available at https://www.icln.org/subgroups.cfm#radiological-laboratory-response. Additional resource documents are available at this link, including The Tenuous Future of Radiological Laboratories. This document addresses the critical challenges facing radiological laboratories, including a loss of expertise in radiochemistry due to personnel retirements coupled with a shrinking number of qualified replacements; aging and difficult-to-maintain radioanalytical instrumentation and equipment; and deteriorating radiological laboratory facilities that jeopardize the generation of essential data. Another document, Radiological Laboratory Response: Limiting Issues, is useful in preparing for a major incident response. This document describes the various phases of a laboratory response, identifies components, and proposes solutions to limitations that may severely affect the laboratory’s ability to rapidly respond to a major radiological or nuclear incident.