The Integrated Consortium of Laboratory Networks Newsletter

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The Integrated Consortium of Laboratory Networks (ICLN) is a system of interconnected federal laboratory networks that can quickly respond to high-consequence incidents and give decision makers timely, credible, and interpretable data.

ICLN
Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction

Department of Homeland Security

NETWORK SPOTLIGHT:

National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN)

Using the ICLN Veterinary Network to Analyze Human SARS-CoV-2 Samples

The purpose of USDA's National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) is to enhance the nation's early detection of, response to, and recovery from animal health emergencies, including bioterrorist incidents, newly emerging diseases, and foreign animal disease agents that threaten the nation's food supply and public health. The NAHLN includes sixty (60) Federal, state and university-associated animal health diagnostic laboratories across forty-two (42) states that provide routine endemic disease diagnostics as well as rapid response diagnostics to animal and zoonotic diseases of high consequence. Very early in the pandemic, many NAHLN laboratories quickly established testing capabilities to evaluate animals for the emerging threat of SARS-CoV-2. Currently, thirty-eight (38) NAHLN laboratories are testing for SARS-CoV-2. In addition to evaluating animals, twenty-three (23) of these NAHLN laboratories have been certified to test human samples for SARS-CoV-2 in support of their state's public health response. As of December 2020, over 2 million human clinical samples were tested at NAHLN laboratories.

The National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) is a cooperative effort between two USDA agencies, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) in partnership with the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians (AAVLD).

Overview of the ICLN COVID-19 Lessons-Learned Workgroup

In October of 2020, the ICLN held its first monthly meeting of the COVID-19 Lessons-Learned (L-L) workgroup. Attendees included members from each laboratory network plus a representative from DOE, USGS, the CDC One Health Group, and the CDC Lab Task Force. Members of the workgroup submitted gaps and/or lessons-learned that they experienced within their network due to the ongoing pandemic. An anonymized summary of the gaps/lessons-learned was presented to the workgroup for prioritization and the opportunity to suggest solutions. The summary of lessons-learned includes the following items:

- Shortages of reagents, PPE and other resources (pipettes, etc.).
- Where are agencies getting their disinfection supplies?

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- Need for a mode of general communication (Pandemic updates) between networks.
- Define the process necessary to obtain CLIA certification when analyzing human samples.
- Need for an integrated system and format to report data and communicate results.
- How to best keep up with the ever-changing roster of FDA approved Emergency Use Authorization tests for COVID-19.
- Need for a process to safely open labs while complying with social distancing requirements.
- How to work with reduced staff availability.
- Seeking recommendations on how each network/agency handles COVID-19 testing and contact tracing of employees.
- How to deal with quarantine affiliated with a COVID-19 positive employee.
- How to best protect staff/employees who are required to deploy or travel during a pandemic?

Workgroup members have volunteered for specific gaps for which they will draft a proposed/potential solution. These solutions will be presented in a summary report generated by the workgroup.

Previous ICLN Tabletop Exercises & Interagency Activities

TABLETOP EXERCISES (TTXs):

- B. anthracis (December, 2008)
- Melamine in macaroni product (December, 2008)
- H5N1 exercise (2009)
- B. anthracis inhalation (IBRD, July 2010)
- B. anthracis inhalation (October, 2010)
- C. botulinum in food (October, 2010)
- Sodium fluoroacetate in food (October, 2010)
- Foot and Mouth Disease (March 2011)
- Rathyibacter Toxicus (September 2011)
- Rad TTX: 3 RDD (Denver, Chicago, Los Angeles) using Strontium-90 and Plutonium- 238 (February, 2012)
- Chemical-in-Milk/ChemR2 (August, 2012)
- Foot and Mouth Disease in Milk (May, 2013)
- Radiological IND (July, 2013)

- Anthrax Validation Exercise (April, 2014)
- Cyclosarin Tabletop Exercise (September, 2014)
- Nuclear Power Plant Tabletop Exercise (June, 2015)
- Sodium Fluoroacetate Tabletop Exercise (December, 2015)
- Cyanide/Ethyl Parathion/Strontium-90 Mixed Agent Tabletop Exercise (September, 2017)
- Opioid Tabletop Exercise (September, 2018)

INTERAGENCY ACTIVITIES:

- Northern Lights (October, 2016)
- COVID-19 multi-agency incident (2020-2021)