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NEWSLETTER

SUB-COMMITTEE ON ANIMAL HEALTH LABORATORY STANDARDS

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NATA's Veterinary Testing Accreditation Advisory Committee (VTAAC).

Each field of Laboratory Accreditation, the Reference Material Producers, Proficiency Testing Scheme Providers and Inspection Accreditation Programs, have an AAC (Accreditation Advisory Committee). The AACs have a unique and important role in NATA's activities. They provide input to operations within the relevant field and advice to the Board at both a strategic and technical level.

The role of the VTAAC covers three broad areas: technical, strategic and administrative.

The primary role of the VTAAC is to provide guidance on the interpretation of technical requirements of the standard and field application documents, to keep NATA abreast of technical developments in the field, to review results and availability of proficiency testing programs and to act as a liaison between NATA secretarial staff and accredited facilities in relation to technical issues.

The VTAAC has a strategic role in identifying new areas of accreditation, in critical evaluation of the functions and services of the AACs

and NATA, in identifying means of improving technical competence and training and in promoting the relevance of accreditation to industry and other institutions.

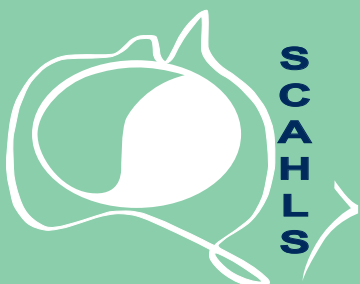
The administrative role involves reviewing assessment reports and recommending continued, varied or new accreditations, approving new assessors and reviewing complaints of a technical nature.

Current members of VTAAC are;

- Jim Taylor, *Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (Chair)*
- Peter Daniels, *CSIRO, Australian Animal Health Laboratory*
- Phillip Clark, *Murdoch University*
- Mark Williamson, *Gribbles Veterinary Pathology*
- Drue Edwards, *Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service*
- Kevin Doyle, *Australian Veterinary Association*
- Stephen Pyecroft, *Department of Primary Industries, Water and Energy, Tasmania*
- Nicole Rowe, *Manager, Veterinary Testing, NATA (Secretariat)*

ANZSDPs

A number of the issues relating to the validation and SCAHLS approval of new tests have been resolved making it possible to move forward with the revisions of the ASDTs into the new format ANZSDPs. Sixteen revisions and five new ANZSDPs are currently with authors and are due for completion within the next six months. These ANZSDPs will be posted on the SCAHLS Website as they become SCAHLS/AHC approved. The most recently approved ANZSDP is a revision of the Enzootic Bovine Leukosis (EBL) ASDT. This is the first of the ANZSDPs to be written in the new format.



Transport of Dangerous Goods – recent developments

Key features of recent changes are provided below.

Air transport

Important amendments to the UN Model Regulations for transport of dangerous goods relevant to veterinary specimens were passed in 2004. IATA adopted these in 2005.

Briefly these changes:

- clarify the definition of a culture;
- allow “low pathogenicity” cultures to be sent as UN 3373;
- make it possible to assign virtually all diagnostic specimens from animals containing infectious agents as UN 3373 (main exceptions are Hendra and Nipah); and
- clarify the situation with respect to serum samples from animals for serological testing only. These can be sent as non-infectious material if packed according to a

set of requirements similar to PI650.

For the full text of these amendments see website below.¹

Australian Draft Transport Code

The National Transport Commission drafted the 7th Edition of the Australian Dangerous Goods Code and revised the legislation used to manage the safe transport of dangerous goods by road and rail in Australia. This code will replace the 6th Road Transport Code issued in 1998 and will cover both road and rail transport. The draft did not contain all of the important updates to the UN Model Regulations. SCAHLS made a submission requesting that the recent changes adopted for air transport be included in the new road and rail code to ensure these were harmonised.

CASA and mandatory training for packers of infectious substances

Under Australian Civil Aviation laws there is still a legal requirement for persons packing any infectious substances for air transport to be trained by an accredited IATA trainer. This includes those packing UN 3373 materials.

¹<http://www.iata.org/NR/ContentConnector/CS2000/SiteInterface/sites/whatwedo/dangerousgoods/file/Section3.6.2Mar05.pdf>

<http://www.iata.org/NR/ContentConnector/CS2000/SiteInterface/sites/whatwedo/dangerousgoods/file/46rev03Jul05.pdf>

Examples for Measurement of Uncertainty in veterinary testing

Seven examples were received from members of the working group: 4 for serology, 1 for parasitology and 2 for bacteriology. In addition, NATA has provided examples from the human testing field for biochemistry and serology, together with updated information about MU.

Most examples follow the “top down” approach, which uses the variation of a control sample to estimate combined sources of uncertainty. The examples can be viewed on the SCAHLS website under <http://www.scahls.org.au/>. More examples will be included as they become available.

SCAHLS Website (www.scahls.org.au/)



The SCAHLS Website is constantly under review and seeks to add information relevant to the maintenance of laboratory standards. Most recently the following information has been posted:

- Worked examples for measurement uncertainty (MU) calculations,
- A validation template for nucleic acid detection tests,
- An ANZSDP revision for Enzootic Bovine Leukosis (EBL) (the first in the new format for ANZSDPs)
- The National Aquatic Animal Health Technical Working Group (NAAH-TWG) now have an Executive Officer and are able to offer more information relating to aquatic animal health issues. This information can be found by clicking on the NAAH-TWG logo on the SCAHLS Website.

Additionally, the SCAHLS Strategic Plan and information under “Expertise”, has been updated.

New Test Development and Approvals

A number of issues have arisen over the last 12 months in regard to the new test development and approval processes. SCAHLS will examine these processes and how they will be managed in a half day workshop following the next meeting in April 2006.

In the mean time, laboratory staff are reminded that, to harmonise with new OIE requirements, the SCAHLS New Test Development Working Group has developed templates to be used in the validation and approval process for new tests. All new test applications need to clearly state the purpose of the test and provide acceptable validation for that use.

A template for nucleic acid based tests has been finalised and is now available on the SCAHLS website. A template for approval for serology tests remains in draft form, but interested parties can use the draft to develop validation data for their tests. Requests for the draft serology template should be directed to the SCAHLS Executive Officer, Andrew Gregory.

Currently, new applications for test approval need to be directed to the SCAHLS Executive Officer who will acknowledge receipt of the application and forward it to the New Test Development Working Group for evaluation.

New Standards and Guidelines for Nucleic Acid Detection Techniques

Nucleic acid detection techniques are replacing and/or supplementing many conventional laboratory methods, such as cell and pathogen culture, immunoassays and protein biochemistry.

One of the recommendations forwarded from a SCAHLS Workshop held in November 2003, was the development of Veterinary Laboratory Accreditation Standards & Guidelines for the Nucleic Acid Detection Technology. Since this workshop, work has continued on the development of the document. The aim is to provide consensus standards and guidelines for veterinary laboratories conducting nucleic acid detection techniques. They would be used in veterinary diagnostic laboratories undertaking disease diagnosis and by accreditation authorities, such as the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA), so that laboratories using nucleic acid detection techniques may be assessed for compliance.

The final document is to be released in the next few months.

The Frawley Steering Group on Animal Health Laboratory services and beyond!

After a number of months of deliberation the Steering Group on the future of animal health laboratory services published a detailed report compiled by Les Simms. In essence this report made four key recommendations the focus of which is the establishment of a national co-ordination committee.

It is now being proposed to establish such a body, the National Animal Health Laboratory Services Co-ordination Committee (NAHLS-CC) that will endeavour to ensure that an adequate service is available to deliver to the Australian National Biosecurity Strategy. It is likely that this will be managed as a program within the framework of activities under Animal Health Australia.

Clearly this is likely to impact on all of us involved in the delivery of animal health laboratory services and SCAHLS will endeavour to keep you informed as these arrangements become clearer.

Australian Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians

The inaugural meeting of the AusAVLD was held on 22-23 September 2005 at PIRVic's Attwood facility, following the last SCAHLS meeting. With 120 registrants, the meeting exceeded the organizing committee's expectations. The program for the meeting featured Avian Influenza. This topical subject attracted several distinguished scientists who gave authoritative presentations. The remainder of the program was filled with a mixture of interesting topics reflecting the diversity of agents and disciplines of interest to veterinary diagnosticians.

At the conclusion of the scientific meeting there was enthusiastic support for continuation of the association. Dr Peter Kirkland was nominated as President and a committee was formed (Russell Graydon, Michael Johnson, Richard Weir, Deb Cousins, Nick Moody, Tracey Berg, Jennifer Mc Eachern and Jane Oakey) to develop a charter of operations and steer the development of the fledgling organization.

Issues for the committee to consider included the site and date of the next meeting, sponsorship, subscription fees, linkage with WAVLD, constitution and incorporation. Interested parties should contact Peter Kirkland (peter.kirkland@dpi.nsw.gov.au).