

THE WISCONSIN VETERINARY DIAGNOSTIC LABORATORY

A Brief History

Veterinary diagnostic activities started on the UW campus in the early 1930's with an agreement between the Dean of the College of Agriculture and the state Director (now Secretary) of Agriculture that there was a need to provide animal disease diagnostic assistance to the veterinarians and producers in the state. Space was provided in one of the College of Agriculture buildings. There was such demand for the service that there was soon a need for more people and space. In 1938, with an agreement between the College of Agriculture and the Department of Agriculture, land was provided to build a new diagnostic facility. That facility, now used for other purposes, remains across the creek to the west of the School of Veterinary Medicine. That location was chosen, at least in part, to be close to the federal (USDA) hog cholera antiserum production facility. The diagnostic laboratory has been at its present location on Mineral Point Road since 1964 on a site that was provided by the university.

The Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (WVDL) was established by 1999 Wisconsin Act 107 (1999 Senate Bill 358) which was enacted on 28 April 2000. With that Act, effective July 1, 2000, the Wisconsin Animal Health Laboratory was transferred from the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to the University of Wisconsin System and renamed the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory. The legislative action to transfer the laboratory to the university happened, to a great extent, because the laboratory had been under-budgeted, under-staffed and lacking in effective leadership to the point that its national accreditation status was in jeopardy.

The legislation "...created a veterinary diagnostic laboratory board attached to the University of Wisconsin System..." and provided that the "...board shall do all of the following: (a) Prescribe policies for the operation of the veterinary diagnostic laboratory. (b) Develop biennial budget requests for the veterinary diagnostic laboratory. (c) In accordance with sub.(3), set fees for services provided by the veterinary diagnostic laboratory." Act 107 provided that "The veterinary diagnostic laboratory shall do all of the following:

- (a) Operate a laboratory that does all of the following:
 - 1. Provides testing and diagnostic services for all types of animals, including fish, in this state, with emphasis on services for farm animals.
 - 2. Provides the diagnostic services necessary to meet the requirements for accreditation by the American Association of Veterinary Laboratory Diagnosticians.
 - 3. Provides the testing and diagnostic services needed by the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to discharge the department's responsibilities related to disease control and animal health.
- (b) Maintain a regional laboratory in the city of Barron.
- (c) In cooperation with the School of Veterinary Medicine and the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, participate in research and in the provision of field services, consultation services and education as determined to be appropriate by the veterinary diagnostic laboratory board.

Following a site study for a new laboratory facility, the WVDL Board acted to support Option 3D as presented by Strang, Inc (Architecture, Engineering, Interior Design) of Madison, WI. Their recommendation was that upon review of the various site options, it appears that Option 3D (a stand-alone building connected to the School of Veterinary Medicine) meets the greatest needs of the program. Funding for the project has been enumerated by the State Legislature and construction will begin soon after July 2003. The UW Central Planning Committee has approved the site located immediately south of the SVM, contingent upon steam and cooled water becoming available from the new power plant under planning next to the current west campus facility.

Dr. Robert M. Shull was named the new Director, effective May 1, 2001. Seven other faculty members in the areas of pathology, clinical medicine, epidemiology, virology, and bacteriology have joined the staff of the lab since June 2001.