

What to Know: *Establishing a drug testing program*



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In the Drug Testing Laboratory of the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL) more than 3,500 tests are conducted annually for livestock shows across the nation. The Drug Testing Laboratory was established in 1989. Since its inception, our chemists and diagnosticians have developed numerous assays to detect a wide range of drugs and drug classes.

With the rapid advancements in technology and analytical capabilities, we take pride in offering our clients testing using state-of-the-art equipment. Our staff is experienced and we are prepared to meet your drug testing needs.

We have found that the key to assisting the show through a drug testing program is for each livestock show—be it a county fair, regional, state or national show—develop a policy regarding the use of therapeutic and prohibited substances in livestock projects. With a policy in place, TVMDL can then develop a testing program that fits the show's policy. TVMDL recommends the following guidelines in establishing a livestock show's policy related to banned substances:

- Define the acceptable use of drugs
- Determine the consequences of a positive test
- Establish rules and payment responsibility for split sample testing

Once a policy is developed, we encourage you to set up your own show account with TVMDL, rather than submitting samples using a veterinarian's account. A show account provides an added layer of security for all involved in testing.

DRUG SCREENING

To ensure exhibitor integrity and fairness at livestock shows, most show managers opt for drug screening. As a policy, TVMDL does not disclose the names of the drugs that are screened for in livestock show samples. We also do not offer recommendations on the number of animals a show should screen. A show's size and/or drug testing budget may dictate the number of animals to be tested.

Drug screening at TVMDL is routinely performed on urine specimens. Urine is collected in 4oz (120mL) specimen cups. Two specimens should be collected from each animal; a minimum of 20 mL should be collected in each. Both specimens are handled and labeled in an identical fashion, but the show retains one, referred to as the "split sample". Split samples should be retained frozen in a secure environment with limited access.

If testing poultry, a fecal sample is preferred for screening. Approximately 5 grams of feces is required for drug testing in poultry.

Turnaround times for drug screening in urine and feces average 5-10 business days from receipt of the samples and could extend several more days depending on how many samples are submitted.

The fee for Livestock Show Drug Screening is \$42 per sample for in-state clients and \$84 for out-of-state clients. An accession fee is also applied and is \$6 for in-state clients and \$7.50 for out-of-state clients. This accession fee is applied to each case or box, not each sample.

RETINA TESTING

If the show is terminal, TVMDL can perform testing on retina tissue for beta-agonist drugs. If requesting this testing, one eyeball should be submitted to TVMDL and the second eyeball maintained by the show and kept frozen.

Turnaround times for retina drug screening are 15-25 business days. The fee for this test is \$120 per sample for in-state clients and \$240 per sample for out-of-state clients. An accession fee is also applied and is \$6 for in-state clients and \$7.50 for out-of-state clients. This accession fee is applied to each case or box, not each sample.

VALUING CONFIDENTIALITY

Results from livestock show drug screening are reported to only one stock show representative. Sample cups and submission forms should only include animal species and animal ID numbers (e.g. "Steer #101" or "Swine #1A"). Exhibitor and/or animal names should never be submitted to the lab.

If you have any questions regarding drug screening at TVMDL, please contact:

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979.845.3414, or toll free at 1.888.646.5623.

Visit tvmdl.tamu.edu for more information on diagnostic testing services.

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