Mays receives Vice Chancellor’s Award in Excellence

Annually, the Vice Chancellor’s Award in Excellence program recognizes outstanding achievements by personnel of Texas A&M AgriLife, which includes the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL). This year, Travis Mays is honored with a Service Award in the Diagnostic Services category. Mays is the Analytical Chemistry Section Head at the agency headquarters in College Station.

Mays started working with TVMDL as a student in 2001. He graduated from Texas A&M University with a bachelor of science in animal science in 2002, and with a master of science in toxicology in 2009. Upon graduation, Mays worked at a horse breeding farm in North Texas before returning to TVMDL. Over the years in the lab, Mays has moved from student worker to technician to a position as a veterinary toxicologist to his current role managing two labs, the Drug Testing Laboratory and Toxicology Laboratory. Together, the sections comprise the Analytical Chemistry Section.

“Travis Mays is a TVMDL success story. A seasoned professional with over a decade of experience in toxicology and a vast knowledge of toxins and drugs, Travis was a natural fit to oversee our Analytical Chemistry Section,” said Stacy Morris, TVMDL chief of staff. “Travis’ leadership, tenacity and expertise are the reasons the agency has been able to achieve milestones in recent years.”

Since 2012, Mays has worked diligently to boost the efforts of the Drug Testing Laboratory (DTL). The DTL annually performs more than 3,500 tests for livestock shows and 7,400 tests for canine and equine racing; it serves as the official testing laboratory for the Texas Racing Commission. In 2012 TVMDL sought to gain ISO17025 accreditation from the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation Competition Animal Drug Testing Laboratory Accreditation Program, which required the lab to make personnel and equipment changes and revise several quality assurance protocols. Mays worked diligently to retrain existing staff and hire new professionals. In 2014, the DTL was granted accreditation.

But Mays has not stopped with one feather in the DTL cap—in 2016, he hopes to add accreditation from the Racing Medication and Testing Consortium, Inc. The efforts not only bolster TVMDL, but the Texas racing industry as a whole.

“Mr. Mays’ breadth of knowledge and complete availability have enhanced the Racing Commission’s capacity to ensure the safety of both the equine and canine racing populations and to preserve the integrity and fairness of racing,” said Chuck Trout, executive director of the Texas Racing Commission.
In addition to his role overseeing two important labs, Mays gives of his time to attend livestock show competitor meetings to provide information about drug residues in livestock. The Texas 4-H and Texas FFA rely on Mays to effectively communicate reside avoidance to major livestock officials, county extension agents, agricultural science teachers and other livestock industry members. His assistance with the “Quality Counts” program curriculum enabled Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Specialist Billy Zanolini, PhD, to provide youth with livestock projects accurate and up to date information not previously allotted.

“Travis’ calm and confident demeanor is ideal to handle the sensitive residue avoidance field,” said Dr. Zanolini. “He is poised with the talent of communicating cumbersome and technical terminology into a presentation that is easy for the audience to understand. Due to Travis’ expertise, we have asked him to serve as a contributing author to our Quality Counts curriculum revision project.”

Mays’ dedication to the agency’s mission – protecting animal and human health through diagnostics – has not gone unnoticed. In 2014, he was awarded the TVMDL Director’s Excellence Award for professional staff; in 2008, he was the technical staff Employee of the Year at TVMDL. Mays is also a 2012 graduate of the Texas A&M University Leadership Institute. It is with pleasure that TVMDL congratulates Travis Mays on receiving the 2015 Vice Chancellor’s Award in Excellence.

TVMDL employs more than 150 professionals that work diligently to uphold the agency’s mission to protect animal and human health through diagnostics. For more information on the Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory, visit tvmdl.tamu.edu.

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