Proper planning simplifies sample collection, shipping and testing

The Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL) aims to produce accurate and timely results for all clients. This is especially important for the agency’s work with livestock shows, where a test result can mean the difference in an exhibitor winning scholarship money or being disqualified.

Livestock shows can follow a few simple steps prior to the show to ensure smooth, efficient and accurate test results.

Setting up an account
First, all livestock shows should establish a client account with the laboratory. There are two options for laboratory accounts: a livestock show account or an account held by the show veterinarian. While either is acceptable, we recommend signing the show up for its own account. There is no charge to sign up. With an account:

• One designee per show will receive results
• Results may be sent via email
• TVMDL staff will generally personally call clients prior to releasing results
• Shows can pay invoices online
• TVMDL maintains secure electronic records of all case results
• Records can be accessed through TVMDL’s secure online portal

To set up an account, contact the finance section at 979.845.3207, or visit tvmdl.tamu.edu/products-services/billing.

**Before the show**
Prior to the show, ensure all staffers who assist in sample collection are aware of proper collection procedures. Also, gather collection materials and forms.

• Order urine cups and evidence tape 2-4 weeks prior to the show.
  o TVMDL offers these supplies at-cost to clients, or show staff may obtain them from other suppliers.
• Establish a system to provide and verify unique identifier numbers for each sample.
• Prepare a chain of custody form for the samples. A multilayer carbonless form is best.
  o Each show works with a printer of their choice to create the multilayer carbonless form and identifies it with their brand or logo.
  o The form allows for the show to block exhibitor information before sending to the laboratory, ensuring confidentiality.
• Review sample collection processes and proper shipping procedures.

On site collection and shipping
Actual sample collection should yield a minimum of 20 mL of urine per sample, and two identical samples should be taken. Remember, one sample is sent to TVMDL and another is kept by the show in case confirmation or split-sample testing is required or requested.

It is important to follow TVMDL’s guidelines for preparing the sample for shipping.
• Fill out one TVMDL accession form per show, listing each animal by the identification number assigned by the show. Do not include exhibitor names or contact information.
• Ensure the account number, name and organization’s contact information is clearly printed.
  o Test request is the Livestock Show Drug Screen
  o If zilpaterol testing is needed, indicate so separately
• Chill samples before shipping; ship with ice packs to ensure the specimens arrive chilled.

• Each sample should be secured with evidence tape. Place the tape across the top of the jar or cup, but never around the top or over the label.

• Be careful if freezing cups, as they can crack in transit. TVMDL suggests sealing each sample in its own zip to close-style baggie to ensure the sample is not contaminated.

Shipping
In the past several months, customers noticed a frequent delay in sample arrivals when shipping via United States Postal Service; however the postal service is working as diligently as possible under budget constraints.

Overnight delivery significantly improves the chances of your sample arriving in good condition for diagnostic testing. Using carriers such as Federal Express (FedEx), LSO (formerly Lone Star Overnight) and United Parcel Service (UPS) ensures samples arrive in a timely manner. The initial cost of an
overnight courier may be slightly higher; however, clients receive verifiable delivery and test results will be available sooner since shipments will have arrived faster. Remember, ship in a styrofoam box that is inside a cardboard box to protect the sample. If a cooler is used for shipping, it will be returned at a nominal charge.

**LSO, regional carrier**
- Operates in Texas and Oklahoma, with select cities in Arkansas, Louisiana and New Mexico.
- Guaranteed on-time delivery by 8:30 or 10:30 a.m.; Saturday delivery options. Pick-up by request, scheduled daily or use their drop boxes.
- Perks include late night pick-ups, live customer service, online tracking and a 99-percent on-time delivery rate.
- Texas clients receive discounts mailing to either the Amarillo or College Station lab, depending on service area.

To set up an account with LSO, visit lso.com/vets. Please contact Chris Garbade with questions, cgarbade@lso.com or 1.800.299.8677 ext 1321.

**FedEx, national carrier**
- The national courier is available in all 50 states.
- Online package tracking, increased drop-off points and scheduled pick-ups are available through FedEx.
- Enter TVMDL’s online client portal to access discounts special to TVMDL clients through FedEx.
- Via the portal, clients can find links to secure online forms that generate specimen labels for delivery to the Amarillo and College Station labs.

For questions on sample collection and shipping, contact TVMDL at 979.845.3414 or toll free at 1.888.646.5623.

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**About TVMDL:**
The Texas A&M Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory protects animal and human health through diagnostics. An agency of the Texas A&M University System, TVMDL comprises two full-service laboratories, in College Station and Amarillo, and two poultry laboratories, in Center and Gonzales.

TVMDL is among 12 core laboratories in the National Animal Health Laboratory Network, a group of state and regional laboratories designed to provide a nationwide surge testing, response, and recovery capacity in the event of an animal disease outbreak.

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