

In addition to hiring an investigator this year, a part-time attorney was hired through the Office of the Attorney General to prosecute the growing number of cases warranting the issuance of formal charges by the SBVME. The hiring of an assistant attorney general to work exclusively for the SBVME is the first of its kind during the SBVME's over 100-year history. The addition of such a key individual is anticipated to assuage the number of cases currently pending and to more quickly adjudicate newer cases presented for action.

Listed below are key statistics from the past three fiscal years:

Category	Year 2005	Year 2006	Year 2007
Licenses issued to new veterinarians	166	127	149
Registrations issued to veterinarians	2,376	2,385	2,412
Registrations issued to registered veterinary technicians	86	75	80
Licenses issued to veterinary hospitals	495	492	508
Percentage of veterinary hospitals inspected and in compliance	99	98	99
Number of new complaints received	71	91	77
Number of complaints pending from previous year	29	24	61
Number of complaints closed	64	54	78

A challenge the SBVME continues to face is the difficulty in offering on-line registration to its licensees. The ability to provide this service would benefit enormously not only many of the SBVME's stakeholders, but also would permit the SBVME's staff to carry out its other responsibilities more expeditiously. Despite the technological constraints faced by the SBVME, it will continue to seek out ways to address this issue.

## Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratories

Maryland Department of Agriculture operates five diagnostic laboratories. They are strategically located in regions of the state where livestock activities create a need for these services. The laboratories are specialized to some extent according to the need.

The Eastern Shore, which rears predominantly poultry, has two laboratories. The Salisbury laboratory performs the critical function of servicing the poultry industry. This laboratory is in the forefront in the diagnosis of important poultry diseases that may affect the production and productivity of poultry on the Shore or be a threat to the industry. The Centreville laboratory specializes in large animals while the College Park, Frederick and Oakland laboratories handle all species, but few poultry.

This year, the laboratories have been very productive. The Salisbury Laboratory reported an increase in necropsies during the months of February, July and December. The major conditions seen January and December were airsacculitis and colibacillosis. Both conditions were probably initiated by stress due to the cold weather. Conversely, the increased necropsies in July revealed that the mortality was heat related. The increased necropsies in December were mainly due to an outbreak of laryngotracheitis.

The Salisbury laboratory also provides services for other species. Necropsies and tests are done for the Salisbury Zoo, the Humane Society, the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the U.S. departments of Agriculture and the Interior and residents of the area. Avian tuberculosis was diagnosed on several occasions in birds and also in a Cavy submitted by the zoo. In order to assure the public and our trading partners that Maryland poultry is free of important diseases, every commercial flock is tested before slaughter for avian influenza. During the year, 8,083 tests were done representing more than 40,415 birds.

In order to maintain our state's brucellosis-free status, staff conducted a significant amount of testing on bovine animals. A total of 9,931 tests using the milk ring test or BAPA were done. The College Park and Frederick laboratories saw the majority of these samples since they service the dairy production section of the state while staff at the Centreville laboratory ran fewer due to the decreased number of dairy farms on the Eastern Shore.

Other concerns of cattle and dairy farmers include bovine leucosis, Johne's disease, and mastitis. Farmers are encouraged to have their animals tested if bovine leucosis is suspected. Johne's disease is important because of its effect on dairy cattle productivity, its status as a differential diagnosis, and its possible link to Crohn's disease, a human gastrointestinal disease. Several farms are participants in the Johne's eradication program, and this necessitates the submission of sera and/or fecal samples for testing.

The economic importance of mastitis to the dairy industry is understood by the dairy community, perhaps as a result of extension outreach and economic reality. Milk samples submitted for testing totaled 698.

Rabies continues to be a matter of concern among all susceptible species since it is a human disease risk and a reportable disease. A total of 315 potential cases were submitted to the laboratories. Of these, nine of the 35 submitted to Salisbury were positive. Many rabies suspect animals are submitted directly to the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene due to possible human exposure.

College Park is the designated laboratory for contagious equine metritis testing. Upon importation from designated infected countries, horses are quarantined within Maryland and tested for the disease. After a designated number of negative tests, the animals are released from quarantine. A total of 2,687 samples representing 1,015 horses were submitted and tested.

In order to maintain the status of being free of equine infectious anemia, horses must test negative for the disease on an annual basis using the Coggins test. A total of 17,536 Coggins tests were done in our laboratories.

Conducting necropsies is a major activity of the laboratories. Frederick had the greatest number of necropsies with 305, the majority of which were food animals (109) and horses (39), though there were a significant number of dogs and cats (57). The remainder was made up of a variety of species such as deer and other wild life species.

Most of the 111 necropsies done at the Centreville laboratory 36 were food animals, 19 were domestic dogs and cats, and 29 were equine. Of the horses, 24 were fetuses. Though this may appear to be a significant percentage of the total, it is considered normal given the number of horses bred during the year and

that five percent is expected to abort. The number of dogs and cats is not unusual given the rural location of the community, though 120 cremations were done.

Of the 162 necropsies done at College Park, most were of dogs and cats (84). This is not surprising given the urban location of the laboratory and the corresponding large pet population. Twenty-five necropsies were of food animals. The remainder comprised a variety of other species.

The Oakland laboratory performed 71 necropsies. Twenty four of these were food animals and four were dogs and cats. The remainder comprised a variety of species with no significant trends.

In addition to disposals after necropsies, the laboratories also occasionally provide cremation services for pet owners. These transactions are always done bearing in mind the sensitivity of the situation.

The laboratories are first responders and continue to be in a state of readiness to handle emergencies of an animal health nature. Several training courses and exercises were done to ensure proficiency and efficiency in the event of a disease challenge.

In order to effectively carry out the department’s mission, in spite of decreasing financial resources, there is increased reliance on funds provided through cooperative agreements. These agreements are managed by laboratory directors, veterinarians and field inspectors. Training exercises were done in collaboration with USDA to ensure that the process is understood.

**Summary of Tests and Activities by Laboratory**

	Frederick	Centreville	College Park	Oakland	Salisbury	TOTAL
Necropsy	305	111	162	71	62	711
Rabies	126	105	49	0	35	315
Mastitis	478	87	94	39		698
Brucellosis	3,628	1,324	4,532	447	80	10,011
Johne’s Disease	129	604	720	40	0	1,493
Contageous Equine Metritis	0	0	2,687	0	0	2,687
Equine Infectious Anemia	9,680	4120	3,646	0		18,414
Bovine Leucosis	385	176	460	2	1,045	
Parasitology	476	101	212	46	272	1,107
Equine Herpesvirus	14	0	24	0	0	38
Avian Influenza					8,083	
New Castle Disease					1,275	

*Note: Numerous ancillary tests were performed in each laboratory as an aid to a diagnosis and were not be included in this table.*

**The Maryland State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners**

The State Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners (SBVME) is responsible for setting standards to which veterinarians, registered veterinary technicians, and veterinary hospital owners must comply through statutory and regulatory adoptions and amendments. The SBVME also licenses and registers veterinarians; licenses and inspects veterinary hospitals and humane organizations; registers veterinary technicians; provides disciplinary information to other state veterinary boards and the public; and submits licensure verification to other state licensing boards upon request. Additionally, the SBVME investigates consumer complaints, initiates its own investigations, and determines whether disciplinary action shall be taken against licensees or registrants. Requests for approval of continuing education credits are reviewed by the SBVME.

The SBVME consists of seven members appointed by the Governor to serve five-year terms. Five of the members are veterinarians; of these five members, two must be primarily large animal practitioners. The remaining two members are consumers. SBVME staff consists of an executive director, administrative specialist, office secretary, and two agricultural inspectors, both of whom split their time between the SBVME and the Maryland Horse Industry Board.

During the last quarter of 2007, the SBVME hired an administrative officer, whose main function will be investigating the more complex and serious allegations presented by the public. The SBVME is the first program at MDA to employ an individual for this purpose, and the SBVME believes that such a position is crucial to fulfilling its mission of protecting the public and promoting animal health and welfare.

This year marked the first year the State Veterinary Technician Committee (VTC) assisted SBVME staff in reviewing registration applications for veterinary technicians. The VTC also participated in the review of initial applications from those individuals seeking to become registered veterinary technicians for the first time. Two goals set for this year pertaining to the VTC were met: 1.) to develop continuing education requirements for registered veterinary technicians; and 2.) to sponsor and send a job analysis survey created by the VTC to all registered veterinary technicians.

Several meetings between SBVME staff and the Information Technology department of MDA resulted in changes affecting not only SBVME staff, but more recently and more significantly, changes affecting licensees and the public. With revisions to the SBVME’s database, some steps previously taken during the registration of veterinarians have been eliminated. Additionally, in an effort to improve public outreach, work was begun to revise the SBVME’s webpage last year. Some of the items Internet users may now easily access include: laws and regulations governing the practice of veterinary medicine in Maryland; licensing applications and instructions; names and license numbers of currently registered veterinarians; and information on taking examinations, obtaining continuing education credits and requesting letters of good standing.

This year, the SBVME made several changes to its regulations, the more noteworthy of which include the following:

- 1.) The submission of an emergency action permitting the SBVME to waive the current requirement of five years of continuous clinical practice or five years of continuous teaching of clinical veterinary medicine for individuals who have exigent circumstances that have interfered with their ability to practice continuously.
- 2.) The addition of regulatory language that would permit veterinarians to obtain up to 50 percent of their continuing education credits through computer-based courses.
- 3.) The revision of examination requirements for foreign veterinary graduates seeking licensure in Maryland. These amendments were made in accordance with new requirements of the Educational Commission for Foreign Veterinary Graduates.
- 4.) An amendment to the administrative procedure by which veterinary licensing candidates may register to take the national veterinary licensing exam. Examinee candidates are now required to contact only the National Board of Veterinary Medical Examiners for approval to take the exam.
- 5.) The development of continuing education guidelines for registered veterinary technicians.