California Veterinary Medicine Training & Research Center Getting New Diagnostics Lab

By Cecilia Parsons

Dairy producers as well as other livestock owners will benefit from the new diagnostics laboratory being built at the University of California Veterinary Medicine Training and Research Center (VMTRC) in Tulare, Calif.

The new 29,000-square-foot lab will not only add more space for diagnostics and testing, but will be able to handle larger numbers of animals and samples for better turn around times. The new lab is loosely scheduled to open in March 2016.

Dr. John Adaska, VMTRC Director, said the $45 million construction project has been in the works for the past decade.

“The original lab here was designed as a lab for vet students,” Adaska said. It has been part of the state system of diagnostic labs. With added capacity, it will serve as an important disease surveillance component for California.

The new lab will be able to handle even more cases than the current lab sees, he said. Its primary purpose will be disease surveillance and detection for beef, dairy cattle and poultry. Slaughter houses currently send suspected TB samples to Tulare for testing.

The new lab will also accommodate current biosafety and biosecurity needs and provide the flexibility to adopt ever-changing diagnostic technologies. It will also be able to offer PCR testing, additional serologic testing and other diagnostics not currently available at the Tulare location.

“Our goal for the laboratory system is to solve everyday problems with respiratory, reproductive and digestive for the dairy producers and to provide optimal food safety surveillance,” Adaska said.

Dr. Richard Breitmeyer, former state veterinarian and now director of the California Animal Health and Food Safety (CAHFS) laboratory system, said that this lab serves as an important tool for dairy producers. As an example, he said calf ranches routinely submit calves for testing to monitor herd health. A new whole cow incinerator will replace a smaller incinerator.

The CAHFS laboratory system is funded by California Department of Food and Agriculture, but is operated by the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine. The laboratory system is the backbone of California’s early warning system to safeguard public health from foodborne pathogens and diseases common to animals and humans. The system also protects the health of California’s livestock and poultry by providing surveillance for catastrophic animal diseases not currently found in the U.S. ✯