VDS Moves into New Building!!

Aside from the fact that moving an entire laboratory is about as much fun as having periodontal surgery, VDS moved into the brand-new New Mexico Scientific Laboratories building in September of 2010. But let’s begin at the beginning – the planning process in the NM Legislature likely began early in the decade, followed by months of the construction bid process, followed by months and months working with specialized architects, all interspersed with years of budget-wrangling and issues that normally delay a project of this magnitude and cost. Groundbreaking was in early 2008 and we watched the building rise from a big hole in the ground to the 21st century building we now call Home. It couldn’t happen fast enough for any of us!

Preparation for the physical move began in 2009 and when the time came for us to actually DO the move (and that means all three “tenants” – NM State Laboratory, UNM’s Office of the Medical Investigator, and VDS), it took much more than a month to make the transfer of all parts and pieces and personnel and equipment. The move was accomplished by a professional scientific moving company and none of our staff were misplaced during the relocation (although a couple of the staff members may have lost their minds). The building is bright and open and we no longer have the 1970s turquoise-and-maroon-with-random-unidentified-substances-of-unknown-origin color scheme. It’s darned nice in here. Although it has been a year since we moved, it’s taken some time to reorient our heads to the space and function but we are now ready to be the proud hosts of an Open House we are planning for November. Invitations with details are forthcoming as soon as we trick some poor soul into being event coordinator!

During the past year, not only have we made the physical move, there have been staffing changes and reorganizations in some areas – we continue to “tweak” the system in order to offer more diagnostic choices in addition to expanding our current services. The second page of this newsletter will introduce you to the VDS staff – those dedicated, professional, and talented people who make VDS your “go-to” choice for diagnostic testing.

This is the first newsletter of what we plan to be a quarterly issue. Future issues will have information on new testing, tracking of disease trends, and other items of interest. First things first – we need a good title! Send in your suggestions (keeping in mind the mission of VDS) and you could win a fabulous round-trip to Grants on a glass-bottomed bus (prize may be substituted with something equally exhilarating)!

From the Jeff Witte, Director of New Mexico Department of Agriculture/Secretary of Agriculture

I want to take this opportunity to introduce myself to our veterinary community. I was honored to be named the Director/Secretary of Agriculture for the State of New Mexico by the Board of Regents at New Mexico State University. I was raised on a ranch in Northern New Mexico and have been associated with NMSU for over 17 years. For the past several years I was involved in a number of projects which included preparedness and training to respond to incidents involving large animals. New Mexico is fortunate to have a dedicated force of private veterinarians who are willing to assist in emergency situations. NMDA has a unique relationship and structure which has served the citizens of New Mexico well for over 100 years. NMDA is distinctive in that the veterinary diagnostic lab for the State of New Mexico located in the State’s new state-of-the-art Scientific Laboratory building in Albuquerque, allowing a strong working relationship between those who conduct human health diagnostic surveillance and those who do the same for animals.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns about VDS. I want VDS to be your lab of choice and will work hard to make it so.

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Change of VDS Directorship – The dream of spending time fishing and/or hunting has overcome Dr. Flint Taylor and he announced his retirement on July 1st. Flint has served as Division Director since 2002; during that time he has been responsible for the day-to-day operation of VDS, and coordinating efforts with several state and federal agencies. He will continue to work on a part-time basis until such time that a replacement veterinary pathologist can be recruited. Dr. Tim Hanosh has been appointed by Jeff Witte as the VDS interim Director. Dr. Hanosh is well known (we’re thinkin’ infamous) in the vet community and joins us after having been a mixed animal practitioner, vet hospital owner, Assistant State Veterinarian for NM Livestock Board and involvement with ALIRT. Dr. Hanosh has a BS in Biology from Creighton University (Omaha) and DVM from CSU (1988) but we’ve decided to let him stay anyway. He brings a business-oriented perspective to VDS. We welcome Dr. Hanosh!
THE VDS “HOME TEAM”

**PATHOLOGY SECTION SUPERVISOR**

John Ragsdale, DVM, Dipl. ACVP, PhD

John joined the staff in 2010, graduating from the University of Missouri-Columbia with a DVM in 1996, Diplomate ACVP 2003. He has a Graduate Certificate in Applied Statistics (2007) and a PhD from KSU (2010). John was a veterinary practitioner from 1996-1998 in a small/mixed animal clinic in Illinois and Missouri. In 1998, John began a veterinary anatomic residency program at KSU while instructing veterinary students in pathology. He comes highly recommended and keeps M&Ms on his desk for the histotech.

**DIAGNOSTIC PATHOLOGIST**

Norbert Takacs, DVM, Dipl. ACVP

Norbert graduated as veterinarian from the Faculty of Veterinary Science, Szent Istvan University in Budapest in 1993. From 1994-2000, he was associate researcher at the Department of Pathology and Forensic Veterinary Medicine in Hungary. In 2000, he began an academic study program at the University of Minnesota and was research associate until 2002. Norbert was an anatomic pathology resident at Kansas State University from 2002-2005, at which time he joined VDS.

**DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL OPERATIONS/QUALITY MANAGER**

Greg Jillson, B.S.

Greg is an institution in himself, having worked at VDS since 1981, receiving his B.S. in Biology from UNM in 1984. He has worn most of the hats here, from laboratory technician through Specialist, now holds the many responsibilities of DTO/QM/SO. As DTO, Greg is responsible for all testing while being unofficially in charge of anything else that needs to be done – in all honesty, Greg can DO anything in any department at VDS. He will never be allowed to retire.

**VETERINARY MICROBIOLOGIST/MICROBIOLOGY & MOLECULAR BIOLOGY**

**SECTION SUPERVISOR/ASSISTANT QUALITY MANAGER**

Dawn Bueschel, B.S.

Dawn’s B.S. in Microbiology is from the University of Arizona with a double minor in Chemistry and Veterinary Science. Prior to joining VDS, she worked in the area of pathogenic bacteriology for 14 years at the University of Arizona and at the NIH and supervised a molecular diagnostic service that performed molecular testing of enteric organisms. She has conducted independent research and published peer-reviewed manuscripts. Dawn supervises all molecular testing at VDS, acts as coordinator for NAHLN testing at VDS and functions as the Assistant Quality Manager.

**SEROLOGY/VIROLOGY SECTION SUPERVISOR**

Yugendar Bommineni, DVM, Dipl. ACVM, Ph.D.

Dr. Bommineni received his DVM (ACVP eligible) and his MVsc in Veterinary Microbiology from the College of Veterinary Science in Hyderabad, India and PhD in Microbiology and Pathology from Oklahoma State University. Yugendar oversees serology and virology testing which includes ELISA, agglutination, immunodiffusion and fluorescent antibody techniques. He joined VDS in 2009.

**HISTOPATHOLOGY SECTION SUPERVISOR**

Sally Breeden, HT (ASCP)

Sally joined VDS in 2004 with over 40 years of experience in research, clinical and veterinary histology. She has been Board-certified by the Board of Registry (ASCP) since 1969. Her experience includes clinical, veterinary and research pathology at (among others) Inhalation Toxicology Research Institute, UNM School of Medicine (Neurology), at the Primate Research Institute (NMSU) and was been involved in some odd experiences with leprosy research involving armadillos in Hawaii. She is Charter Member of the National Society for Histotechnology. Sally performs gross examination of tissue samples and creation of microscopic slides from those samples for diagnosis by the pathologists. She continually ensures the quality of Dr. Ragsdale’s M&Ms.

**MOLECULAR BIOLOGIST/VERTEBRATORY LABORATORY SCIENTIST**

Julia Boehler, B.S.

Julia graduated cum laude from UNM in 2007 with a BS in Biological Anthropology, emphasis on Human Evolutionary Ecology with a Minor in Earth & Planetary Sciences. She worked as a VDS lab aide from 2006-2008 and began in this new position at VDS in 2009. Julia has extensive scientific and safety training from several federal and state agencies. She is primarily responsible for performing molecular biology duties at both BSL2 and BSL3 levels and assists with quality system training. Julia is our official Social Director as well (Oh, Julia – did we forget to tell you?).

**SHIPPING/RECEIVING VETERINARY TECHNICIAN**

Marissa Luke, RVT

Marissa is a graduate of the CNM Veteranary Technician program and, as a student in 2007 while spending time at VDS doing her clinical rotation, we recruited her after graduation (with honors!) to join the staff as lead veterinary technician. After just a few months, she was given the responsibilities as lead laboratory/necropsy/receiving/shipping technician. Marissa consults with clients relating to submissions for testing, manages the facility's inventory and performs parasitology and prepares cytology samples for examination by the pathologists. She has trained for a period of time in the Histopathology laboratory and can serve as backup.

**ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES SECTION SUPERVISOR**

L. Kim Ethridgehill, B.S.

Kim has been at VDS since 1994, working as an increasingly-diversified Records Technician, rapidly becoming Administrative Services Section Supervisor. Kim oversees all administrative functions of the division, prepares and analyzes reports, provides training on the LIMS, website activities for VDS, functions as proxy Director on some administrative functions, maintains personnel and financial records. She is not allowed to retire, either, because she knows where all the skeletons of past employees are kept.

**ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES ASSISTANT**

Cynthia Todd Maedche, A.S.

Cindy began at VDS in 2010 after working in the technology field, in process quality control and as a veterinary assistant. She has an Associate’s degree in Semiconductor Technology and an Associate’s degree in Equine Science, giving her a varied relevant background for her position at VDS. In the windstorm of paperwork generated at VDS, Cindy is the “roper” – keeping reports and data where they should be. Cindy’s experience in both veterinary science and her attention to detail make her good fit for VDS.