



# Maryland Department of Agriculture

Agriculture | Maryland's Leading Industry

*Office of the Secretary*

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August 26, 2009

Dear MDA Animal Health Laboratory Customer:

I am writing to inform you of several significant actions the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) will be taking regarding our Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory System. This important information helps us maintain our ability to continue to serve your animal health diagnostic needs.

Beginning September 8, the Maryland Department of Agriculture will start closing the College Park, Centreville, and Oakland Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratories. During September, operations at these three facilities will be phased out, with the work and staff shifted to the remaining laboratory facilities in Frederick and Salisbury by October 1, 2009. I have provided information below to begin the process. The State Veterinarian will be providing additional specific information to you shortly.

The laboratory consolidation is in response to an ongoing operating budget shortfall (\$400,000 in 2009) caused by decreased revenues from diagnostic services, decreased federal support, the State budget deficit along with steady increases in costs to operate the laboratories (fuel, maintenance, supplies, salaries, etc). These years of revenue decline have been accompanied by reductions in staffing and certain services. It has become clear that we can no longer continue to operate, maintain and staff five laboratories in Maryland. This trend precedes the current State revenue shortfall of which all are aware. While closing the laboratories adequately addresses the long-term revenue decline, the current State fiscal situation requires us to make further cuts to meet current and future expenditure limits. These cuts have been made by eliminating three staff positions, one vacant and two of which are occupied by outstanding State employees.

While these changes are painful to all, we are certain that we can emerge from this with a Laboratory System that is more robust and capable of providing world-class diagnostic services to our producers and their industries. At the same time, we will be in a better position to meet the regulatory, readiness and response responsibilities of the agency.

We expect to gain efficiencies and increase diagnostic capabilities as other states have done by consolidating personnel and physical resources into two laboratories. When we complete this transition, Maryland will have a full-service livestock laboratory in Frederick and a full-service poultry laboratory in Salisbury, both well situated to serve the concentrations of their respective industries and provide essential public health and forensic diagnostic support to other government agencies. Both facilities will have augmented staff and increased operating funds available to support the additional work that we anticipate being redirected from the other laboratories.

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We will continue to offer all of the livestock and poultry diagnostics previously available. The animal diagnostic services available to you will remain the same, except for the location to which samples should be delivered or mailed. Details of any services or changes can be viewed at [www.mda.state.md.us/animal\\_health/](http://www.mda.state.md.us/animal_health/).

Effective September 8, 2009, livestock samples, specimens, and live or dead animals from the entire State should now be sent or delivered directly to the Frederick Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory. The address of the laboratory is 1840 Rosemont Avenue, Frederick, MD 21702. The telephone number is 301.600.1548; Fax 301.600.6111 and the email address is [AHFrederick@mda.state.md.us](mailto:AHFrederick@mda.state.md.us). The Frederick Laboratory will soon be approved to perform basic avian influenza diagnostics and will be able to support most basic non-commercial poultry diagnostic needs in Maryland west of the Bay.

Commercial poultry samples from the entire state and non-commercial poultry samples originating from the Eastern Shore of Maryland will continue to be sent to the Salisbury Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory. The address is 27722 Nanticoke Road, Salisbury, MD 21801. The telephone number is 410.543.6610, Fax 410.543.6676 and the email is [AHSalisbury@mda.state.md.us](mailto:AHSalisbury@mda.state.md.us).

We look forward to serving you in the future, and will do everything we can to address any concerns you have regarding these changes. Please contact the appropriate laboratory directly if you have diagnostic needs. Please call the State Veterinarian, Dr. Guy Hohenhaus at 410-841-5810 or email [animalhealth@mda.state.md.us](mailto:animalhealth@mda.state.md.us) if you have specific questions regarding these changes.

Thank you for your patience and understanding during this difficult time for all.

Sincerely,



Earl F. Hance  
Secretary