



# The Integrated Consortium of Laboratory Networks Newsletter

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*The Integrated Consortium of Laboratory Networks (ICLN) is a system of interconnected federal laboratory networks that can quickly respond to high-consequence incidents and give decision makers timely, credible, and interpretable data.*

ICLN  
Countering Weapons  
of Mass Destruction

Department of  
Homeland Security



## ICLN Portal/Data Exchange Utility

The ICLN Portal is a secure, access-protected web portal that promotes communication and coordination among ICLN member networks and serves as a secure, online incident command center for conducting virtual meetings; sending and receiving alerts, emails and situation reports; and saving pertinent documents for response activities.



Hosted on the ICLN Portal, the Data Exchange Utility (DEU) is an information technology infrastructure that supports the exchange of laboratory results data. The DEU converts data presented by laboratory networks in their own “native” format into a common ICLN data format. Stay tuned for more information on the DEU in the next issue of the ICLN newsletter.

## NETWORK SPOTLIGHT:

### One Health Federal Interagency COVID-19 Coordination Group

ICLN member networks, such as NAHLN, FERN, and Vet-LIRN, are members of the **One Health Federal Interagency COVID-19 Coordination Group (OH-FICC)** and activities conducted within the group were essential during the pandemic to apply a One Health approach to COVID-19. The CDC One Health Office created and coordinates the OH-FICC, which brings together representatives from more than 20 federal agencies from multiple departments to share updates and exchange information. The OH-FICC includes a subgroup on animal diagnostics and testing, bringing together relevant partners to address scientific developments regarding animal diagnostics for SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. The group also monitors the level of SARS-CoV-2 animal testing in the United States and makes recommendations related to animal testing and diagnostics to inform public health guidance.

OH-FICC led efforts to improve the understanding of how connections between people, animals (companion, livestock, and other production animals and wildlife including free-ranging and captive), and the environment might affect the spread of this emerging zoonotic disease. Fighting emerging infectious disease threats such as COVID-19 requires strong collaboration with partners across the human, animal, and environmental health spectrum.

Collaborative efforts of OH-FICC and ICLN member networks during the COVID-19 pandemic have included the following:

- Surveillance and testing of SARS-CoV-2 in animals, including sample collection and sequence analysis to identify transmission pathways and genetic variations. [CDC, USDA-NVSL-NAHLN and Vet-LIRN]

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- Utilization of veterinary labs to test for SARS-CoV-2 in animal and human clinical samples. A total of 37 NAHLN labs perform SARS-CoV-2 testing. Of these 37 labs, 31 do animal testing and 25 have obtained Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments certification and can perform testing on human samples. As of February 2021, more than 2.3 million human clinical samples have been analyzed for SARS-CoV-2 by NAHLN labs. [USDA-NVSL-NAHLN]
- Utilization of USDA veterinarians to assist with administration of COVID-19 vaccine to humans. [USDA]
- Technical assistance provided for local, state, federal, and other partners (such as CDC conducting on-farm investigations of SARS-CoV-2 in people, mink, and other animals on mink farms and investigation of pets in households of patients with COVID-19 in collaboration with local, state, and federal One Health partners). [CDC One Health Office, USDA-NVSL-NAHLN, and Vet-LIRN]
- Epidemiologic research and surveillance to evaluate zoonotic transmission of SARS-CoV-2 between people and animals, including the potential establishment of new hosts and reservoirs. [CDC One Health Office, USDA-NVSL-NAHLN, and Vet-LIRN]
- Performance of an Inter-Laboratory Comparison Exercise for SARS-CoV-2 to ensure the nation’s diagnostic laboratories have effective testing systems for human and animal specimens. [Vet-LIRN and USDA-NVSL-NAHLN]
- Development of timely, evidence-based guidance to keep people and animals safe and healthy in a variety of settings, including at home, in veterinary clinics and animal shelters, in pet stores, on farms, and more. [CDC One Health Office, OH-FICC]
- Studying how animal-specific mutations and variants of SARS-CoV-2 might impact the health of people and other animals as well as potential impacts on transmissibility, diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccine efficacy. Collaboration on genomic sequencing of SARS-CoV-2 in people and animals is ongoing in the United States. [CDC One Health Office, USDA-NVSL-NAHLN]



## Radiological Laboratory Subgroup

The Radiological Laboratory Subgroup (RLS) focuses on increasing laboratory efficiency and collaborations across federal radiological network laboratory programs. The subgroup identifies and proposes solutions to laboratory gaps among the ICLN radiological laboratories.

The RLS has developed a document for laboratory managers that highlights unique resources whose availability could be limited during a major radiological or nuclear response. Unique resources are defined as those that have limited availability, are available from only a single or limited number of vendors, and have long lead times for acquisition. A second document for senior managers and administrators regarding radiological unique resources was developed. Both of these documents are available at <https://www.icln.org/subgroups.cfm#radiological-laboratory-response>. Additional resource documents are available at this

link, including *The Tenuous Future of Radiological Laboratories*. This document addresses the critical challenges facing radiological laboratories, including a loss of expertise in radiochemistry due to personnel retirements coupled with a shrinking number of qualified replacements; aging and difficult-to-maintain radioanalytical instrumentation and equipment; and deteriorating radiological laboratory facilities that jeopardize the generation of essential data. Another document, *Radiological Laboratory Response: Limiting Issues*, is useful in preparing for a major incident response. This document describes the various phases of a laboratory response, identifies components, and proposes solutions to limitations that may severely affect the laboratory’s ability to rapidly respond to a major radiological or nuclear incident.

