



Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory

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Summary

The Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL) was created in 1967 to perform diagnostic testing and identify conditions and diseases affecting animal health so that the appropriate state or federal regulatory agency may act to avert potential epidemics. TVMDL's main functions include: providing diagnostic testing services and disease surveillance, conducting sampling testing for poultry flocks under the Texas Pullorum-Typhoid Program, and performing drug testing for horses and greyhounds participating in pari-mutuel races. TVMDL operates with an annual budget of about \$12 million, and a staff of 150. In fiscal year 2006, TVMDL performed more than 1.1 million tests.

House Bill 2024 continues TVMDL but clarifies that it is part of the Texas A&M University System and removes it from future Sunset review. The bill also contains the Sunset Commission's recommendations to provide the agency with a statutory framework that balances the agency's need for flexibility with the Legislature's need for accountability. The list below summarizes the major provisions of H.B. 2024, and a more detailed discussion follows.

Sunset Provisions

1. Continue the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory as an independent agency, but remove the agency from Sunset review.
2. Clarify TVMDL's powers and duties in statute, and require the agency to provide notice and opportunity for public comment when developing its fee schedule.

Provision Added by the Legislature

3. Designate TVMDL as the State Plan Coordinator for the National Poultry Improvement Plan.

Sunset Provisions

1. Continue the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory as an independent agency, but remove the agency from Sunset review.

The Legislature modified the Sunset provision continuing TVMDL to clarify that the agency operates as a part of the Texas A&M University System. The Legislature further modified this provision to remove TVMDL's Sunset date, continuing the agency without being subject to future Sunset review.

2. Clarify TVMDL's powers and duties in statute, and require the agency to provide notice and opportunity for public comment when developing its fee schedule.

House Bill 2024 establishes TVMDL's current mission and functions in law, providing a clearer picture to policymakers, budget writers, and the public as to what the agency does. Specifically, TVMDL's responsibilities include:

- ◆ providing laboratory testing to aid in the identification of diseases;
- ◆ providing tests required for intrastate, interstate, or international animal shipments;
- ◆ identifying disease epidemics;
- ◆ generally assisting livestock owners and veterinarians with problems associated with disease identification, diagnosis, and treatment;
- ◆ reporting disease findings to the appropriate state or federal agencies as specified in statute or rule;
- ◆ providing information the agency deems appropriate to veterinarians, animal owners, and the public regarding animal disease outbreaks and other animal health matters; and
- ◆ performing other diagnostic services or activities as TVMDL determines necessary to address new and emerging threats.

The bill also specifies that TVMDL may provide diagnostic services for companion animals and out-of-state clients only when staff, facilities, and supplies are not required for in-state livestock testing. The bill also improves the public's ability to participate in TVMDL's fee development process, providing greater accountability for the agency's decisions that affect the public. Specifically, TVMDL must provide 30 days' notice of the proposed fee on its website, as well as in its monthly newsletter. In addition, TVMDL must give all interested persons a reasonable opportunity to submit written comments. Changes to the fee schedule may occur only after TVMDL provides appropriate notice and fully considers all public comment received.

Provision Added by the Legislature _____

3. Designate TVMDL as the State Plan Coordinator for the National Poultry Improvement Plan.

The Legislature added a provision to designate TVMDL as the State Plan Coordinator for the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP). TVMDL already has the authority to control and eradicate two of the diseases covered by NPIP. House Bill 2024 expands this authority to have TVMDL's poultry program administrator serve as the state coordinator for the plan.

Fiscal Implication Summary _____

House Bill 2024 will not have a fiscal impact to the State.