

Mobile animal diagnostic lab is developed

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Texas A&M University scientists say they've developed a mobile diagnostic laboratory to test animals in the event of a disease outbreak.

The executive director of the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory, Dr. Lelve Gayle, said a rapid, massive response by health officials is critical during a disease outbreak -- even if the patients are animals.

The lab -- housed in a trailer about the size of a recreational vehicle -- will enable the diagnostic laboratory to expand quickly its capability to respond to an animal disease outbreak such as avian flu or livestock diseases not presently in the United States, Gayle said.

The mobile lab can be ready to process blood and tissue samples for animal diseases within 24-48 hours. The samples are then sent to the main laboratory in College Station, Texas, for testing.

The trailer has biosafety level-three rating, which means it had to pass stringent standards to keep disease organisms from escaping into the environment.

If a disease is suspected, laboratory testing is required -- and Gayle's goal is to have the mobile laboratory ready to test samples within two hours, seven days a week.

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