



North Dakota Veterinary Medical Association

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September 9, 2025

Testimony to SBARE: Ensuring Continued Excellence at the NDSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory

Chair Gulleeson, Dr. Lardy, and members of the board,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today—and thank you for your steadfast support of NDSU Extension and the NDSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (VDL). The services provided through the lab are not only valuable—they are essential to the health of North Dakota's livestock, the livelihoods of our producers, and the strength of our rural economy.

We are especially grateful for your previous support, including your investment in a veterinary toxicology residency and in strengthening serology capabilities, both of which have made a tangible impact. However, we find ourselves at a pivotal moment in ensuring that those vital services continue without interruption.

Recently, a long-serving staff member in the serology section of the lab retired. As you know, serology plays a central role in disease surveillance and response—it is a frontline diagnostic service that veterinarians and producers across the state rely on daily. Understandably, there was concern about whether the lab would be able to refill this critical position, especially given broader uncertainties around funding and staffing. We were relieved when authorization to hire was ultimately granted, but the initial hesitation raised real questions about long-term stability. It's situations like this that underscore why we are here today—to ask for your **unwavering support** in protecting and preserving the full range of diagnostic services the lab provides. The Veterinary Diagnostic Lab cannot fulfill its mission without adequate staffing. These are highly skilled roles that require scientific expertise, continuity, and institutional knowledge. When one position goes unfilled—or is even temporarily in question—it creates ripple effects that can slow diagnostics, delay decision-making, and weaken our overall response to animal health threats.

Looking ahead, the challenges facing animal agriculture are only becoming more complex—emerging diseases, zoonotic threats, trade requirements, and the need for rapid diagnostic turnaround all require a strong, fully staffed lab. Maintaining confidence in the lab's ability to operate at full capacity is crucial.

We urge you to continue advocating for stable, proactive investment in the Veterinary Diagnostic Lab—not just to meet today's needs, but to ensure readiness for tomorrow's

challenges. Your support directly enables us to uphold the high standard of service that North Dakota's veterinarians, producers, and communities expect and deserve.

Thank you for your leadership and your continued commitment to strengthening agriculture through NDSU Extension and the Veterinary Diagnostic Lab.

Thank you again also for your time, attention, and continued support of veterinary medicine in North Dakota.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bleaux Johnson DVM". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the last name "Johnson" being more prominent than the first name "Bleaux". The "DVM" is written in a smaller, simpler font at the end of the signature.

Dr. Bleaux Johnson
President
North Dakota Veterinary Medical Association

On behalf of the Veterinarians of North Dakota