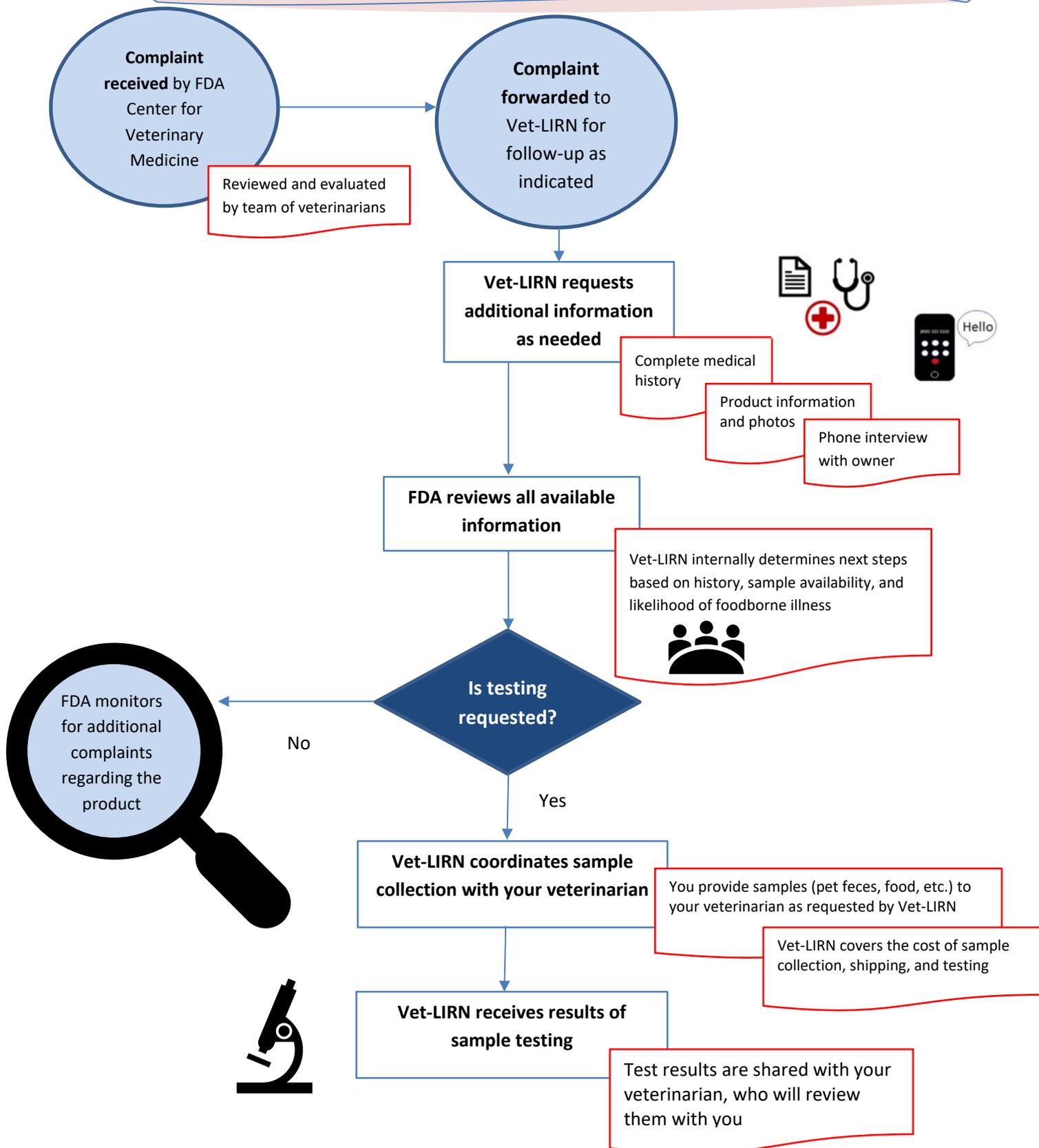


# Vet-LIRN Consumer Complaint Follow-up Cycle

What happens during the Vet-LIRN consumer complaint process?



# Vet-LIRN Consumer Complaint Follow-up Cycle



## Introduction

- 1. What is the Veterinary Laboratory Investigation and Response Network?**
  - The Veterinary Laboratory Investigation and Response Network (Vet-LIRN) is a program within the FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine (CVM). We follow up on certain consumer complaints received by CVM that report illnesses in animals potentially caused by consumption of foods or drugs.
- 2. What is the goal of Vet-LIRN's consumer complaint follow-up?**
  - We try to figure out whether the reported product caused your animal's illness or death. These activities *might* find a cause for your animal's illness or death, although they may help rule out other potential causes.
- 3. Is the information in my complaint kept confidential?**
  - While information found in a consumer complaint is not shared unnecessarily, it is generally not kept confidential. In most cases, only protected personal information (such as names and addresses) is withheld to prevent the complaint from being traced back to the person who submitted it.



## Consumer Complaint Follow-up Procedures

- 1. What will Vet-LIRN do to follow up on my complaint?**
  - In general, Vet-LIRN will collect additional background information from you and your pet's veterinarian, and in *some* cases may collect food/treat product samples or samples from your animal (such as fecal samples) for non-regulatory testing.
- 2. What will Vet-LIRN ask of me during this process?**
  - Medical records: Vet-LIRN will ask you to contact your animal's veterinarian and request the complete medical history for your pet for our review. This includes all parts of the medical record – not just visit invoices or vaccination certificates. This allows for Vet-LIRN to gain a better understanding of your animal's health overall and any medical findings related to their illness.
  - Product information: Vet-LIRN may request photos of the original product packaging including the product label (clearly stating the product name) and the product lot code and expiration date. The lot code is a *crucial* piece of information, and our follow-up is extremely limited when the lot code is not known. Additional information regarding the importance of lot codes can be found [here](#).

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- Owner interview: Vet-LIRN may request a phone interview to discuss the events leading to your animal's illness, as well as your animal's diet history and details about your animal's environment.
- Hold available product: Vet-LIRN may ask that you keep any remaining food product in case it is needed.
- Sample testing: In *certain* cases, we will request samples for testing at one of our network laboratories.
  - Please note: testing is *not* guaranteed as part of our follow-up. The decision to test samples is based on multiple factors and is ultimately made by FDA.



## Sample Testing

### **1. What types of testing might Vet-LIRN perform or request of my veterinarian?**

- While the type of testing performed depends on the nature of the complaint and findings of initial follow-up, Vet-LIRN may request testing of samples for harmful bacteria, toxic substances, or nutritional imbalances that could have led to the illness or death of your animal.

### **2. What types of samples might be needed for testing?**

- Vet-LIRN may request testing of samples from your animal (such as fecal samples, urine samples, or blood samples) or samples of remaining food/treat products. In the event of an animal death, Vet-LIRN *may* request that your veterinarian or one of our network laboratories perform a necropsy (animal autopsy) and collect samples for testing.

### **3. If a necropsy is performed on my pet, can I request a private cremation following the necropsy?**

- Many network laboratories will offer private cremation following a necropsy. If you elect private cremation of your pet, you will need to coordinate this service with the laboratory directly, and the cost of the cremation will *not* be covered by Vet-LIRN. Vet-LIRN will provide you with the information for the laboratory personnel to contact to arrange the necropsy, if requested.

### **4. What will Vet-LIRN ask of me if testing is requested?**

- If Vet-LIRN requests sample testing of a food/treat product or a fecal sample from your pet, we will discuss our request with your veterinarian and ask that you bring the sample(s) to their office. If we request other types of samples from your pet (blood, urine, etc.) Vet-LIRN will discuss our request with your veterinarian but will need you to contact them to coordinate this sample collection, keeping Vet-LIRN informed of the timeline during this process. We are

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unable to schedule veterinary appointments on your behalf; however, we will cover the cost for any fees related to collection of samples specific to our follow-up (e.g., examination fees, blood collection fees, etc.).

## 5. What can I do if Vet-LIRN does not request samples for testing?

- If Vet-LIRN does not request samples for testing and you are still interested in having testing performed, we recommend working with your veterinarian to arrange this testing. Several veterinary diagnostic laboratories across the country (many associated with veterinary schools or state agricultural laboratories) perform bacterial or toxicologic testing of animal foods.

## Payment for Testing Costs

### 1. Who will pay for the cost of testing?

- Vet-LIRN will pay for any testing that we *specifically request* as part of our follow-up, as well as any costs related to collection and shipment of samples. Vet-LIRN will reimburse the participating veterinary hospital for these costs and is *unable* to provide any payment or reimbursement to an animal owner.
- Vet-LIRN will *not* cover the cost of any testing, treatment, or other veterinary services that we do not specifically request.

### 2. Do I need to provide any information for Vet-LIRN to reimburse for testing?

- Sometimes, Vet-LIRN needs an estimate for veterinary services we've requested as part of our follow-up. We must receive this estimate *before* your vet performs these services to allow for Vet-LIRN to obtain approval for reimbursement.

## Testing Results

### 1. Will I receive samples back after testing is complete?

- Once samples are submitted for testing, they become the property of the FDA and will not be sent back to you. If possible, we encourage you to keep a small sample of any remaining food/treat product of concern during the testing process in case there are any issues with sample shipping/testing.

### 2. Will I receive results of sample testing?

- Results of Vet-LIRN testing will be shared with your veterinarian, who will review these results with you in case any additional treatment or testing is needed. Vet-LIRN cannot provide an interpretation of test results or treatment recommendations based on our findings.