



# Network Procedures for Veterinary Laboratory Investigation and Response Network Case Investigations

## Network Procedures for Owners

The purpose of this Network Procedure is to help you, the owner, understand how the Veterinary Laboratory Investigation and Response Network (Vet-LIRN) Program Office conducts case investigations (follow up to consumer complaints).

The following items are explained below:

- General Introduction
- Billing
- Step by Step Process
- Types of Services and Tests

### 1. General Introduction:

#### 1.1. What is the goal of the case investigation?

The goal of the case investigation is to determine if the product is causing your pet's illness. Our case investigation **MAY NOT** provide a definitive diagnosis for your pet's illness, although we may rule out several other potential reasons for your pet's illness.

#### 1.2. What is the focus of a case investigation?

Most case investigations focus on diagnostic samples (such as blood, urine or tissue from the pet), although we occasionally request and test pet food samples.

#### 1.3. What is my veterinarian's role during the case investigation?

Your veterinarian helps our investigation into FDA- regulated products by providing information about your pet's medical history and by obtaining any diagnostic samples like blood, urine or tissue.

#### 1.4. What will Vet-LIRN ask of me during a case investigation?

We may ask that your veterinarian perform certain tests or services or provide diagnostic samples to FDA or a Vet-LIRN cooperating laboratory.



## Network Procedures for Veterinary Laboratory Investigation and Response Network Case Investigations

### **1.5. Will Vet-LIRN pay for tests or services requested?**

Yes, we will pay veterinarians or laboratories *for tests or services requested by Vet-LIRN* and approved through our government purchasing system. We cannot, however, reimburse owners for tests already performed or not specifically requested by Vet-LIRN. We recommend that you discuss with your veterinarian which tests and services will be billed to you and which will be covered by Vet-LIRN. For instance, Vet-LIRN may request that your veterinarian perform a urinalysis on your pet while he or she is hospitalized. Vet-LIRN will pay for the collection and testing of the sample, but would not cover the cost of your pet's stay in the hospital.

### **1.6. Is the information received in the consumer complaint confidential?**

Generally, the information received in the consumer complaint is not kept confidential. In most cases, only protected personal information (such as names and addresses) is withheld in an effort to prevent the complaint from being traced back to the individual who submitted it.

## **2. Billing:**

### **2.1. Will Vet-LIRN pay for bills related to the case investigation?**

Vet-LIRN will cover the cost of services and testing that we specifically request. You should understand that Vet-LIRN *CANNOT* reimburse owners for any veterinary bills. Services *MUST* be pre-authorized and paid directly to the veterinarian.

### **2.2. Will Vet-LIRN pay for testing that was not requested by Vet-LIRN?**

No, we will only pay for testing that we request and authorize.

### **2.3. Will Vet-LIRN pay for treatments or private cremation?**

No, we cannot pay for treatment or cremation.



## **Network Procedures for Veterinary Laboratory Investigation and Response Network Case Investigations**

### **2.4. If I allow my veterinarian to submit my pet's body for testing, will I be able to have back his or her remains?**

Each Vet-LIRN member laboratory has its own procedures for handling remains. Some Vet-LIRN member laboratories offer private cremation services for a fee payable directly to the laboratory. We advise you to discuss directly with the member laboratory the possibilities and costs for obtaining your pet's remains after examination are complete.

### **3. Step by Step Process:**

#### **Vet-LIRN will do the following during a case investigation:**

- 3.1. Assign a case number which **MUST** be included in all correspondences
- 3.2. Discuss the case with you and your veterinarian
- 3.3. Request medical records from your veterinarian
- 3.4. Coordinate with your veterinarian and you to obtain and submit samples for testing
- 3.5. Provide results to your veterinarian who will discuss the results with you.

#### **Vet-LIRN requests that:**

- 3.6. Any follow-up veterinary visits related to the investigation are reported to Vet-LIRN
- 3.7. Additional laboratory reports are reported to Vet-LIRN by your veterinarian.

### **4. Types of Services and Tests:**

#### **4.1. What may a veterinary examination include once the case investigation is started?**

A veterinary examination may include:

- an office visit and physical examination to assess your animals current health
- collection of clinical samples from your animal (blood, urine, feces).

#### **4.2. Will your animal be tested more than once?**



## **Network Procedures for Veterinary Laboratory Investigation and Response Network Case Investigations**

It is possible that Vet-LIRN may request additional tests or examinations depending on results from initial testing.

### **4.3. Will Vet-LIRN need to conduct a necropsy in the event of an animal death?**

Yes, if you are willing, we may request that your veterinarian or another Vet-LIRN cooperating laboratory to conduct a necropsy to collect samples for testing. The samples collected may be tested right away or may be held for future testing or archiving. If the veterinarian completes the necropsy then the remains will be handled according to the veterinarian's normal procedures. If a Vet-LIRN cooperative laboratory completes the necropsy the remains are usually disposed of by that laboratory. Vet-LIRN cannot pay for private cremation. You are welcome to discuss normal procedures with the laboratory.

### **4.4. Will Vet-LIRN ask for a food sample?**

Our main focus is on testing diagnostic tissue or fluid samples from the animal, but we may need to test the food. Please hold all food samples once the consumer complaint is submitted. If needed, we will make arrangements to collect the food.

### **4.5. What are some general tests that Vet-LIRN may request?**

General tests that we may request include, but are not limited to:

- Hematology
- Microbial cultures
- Urinalysis
- Fecal examination
- Necropsy/Histology/Toxicology

### **4.6. Will I get results from Vet-LIRN requested tests?**

Results of testing on your animal's diagnostic tissue or fluid samples will be forwarded to your veterinarian who will be asked to share the results with you.