

# The Secretariat of Agriculture Shows its Strengths in Timely Diagnosis of Exotic Animal Diseases to Trade Partners

More than 80 veterinarians from SENASICA work every day in the field to promote timely notification at 16,000 contact points in the country



The Secretariat of Agriculture and Rural Development invited agricultural attachés from the European Union and 14 countries from five continents to visit the National Reference Center for the Diagnosis and Research of Exotic and Emerging Animal Diseases to learn about Mexico's strengths in the prevention and diagnosis of animal diseases that are not present in the country.

Agricultural representatives from the embassies of Australia, Germany, Ireland, South Africa, Italy, Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Spain, France, Portugal, the Netherlands, and Pakistan visited the Immunology, Cellular, and Molecular Biology Laboratory, the biosafety level 2 animal house and the level 3 Isolation rooms.

These facilities were opened their doors in 2020 and 2022, respectively, to complement the operations of the high-security laboratory level 3 (BSL3) of the National Service for Agro-Alimentary Public Health, Safety, and Quality (SENASICA) located in Cuajimalpa, Mexico City.

This infrastructure, which is part of SENASICA's U.S.-Mexico Commission for the Prevention of Foot and Mouth Disease and other Exotic Animal Diseases (CPA), strengthens the timely detection of diseases and reinforces its response to health emergencies caused by the appearance of new pathogens.

In welcoming the international delegation, the chief director of SENASICA, Francisco Javier Trujillo Arriaga, explained that the

CPA is an institution that for 75 years has strengthened veterinary services in North America and has kept the region free of devastating diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease, West Nile virus, Venezuelan equine encephalitis, African swine fever (ASF) and screwworm, among others.

He specified that one of the most important tasks currently carried out in these laboratories is the analysis of samples taken by field personnel from animals suspected of being affected by exotic pathogens, in order to rule out the presence of diseases such as ASF and classical swine fever, which have the potential to severely affect the national swine industry.

In his turn, Juan Gay Gutiérrez, Director General of Animal Health of the Secretariat of Agriculture, explained that the facilities of the CPA marked a turning point in Mexican veterinary medicine, since in the mid-20th century it was the central point where the strategy for the control and eradication of foot-and-mouth disease was developed, which included the production of more than 60 million doses of vaccines.

He added that in 1954, Mexico became the first country in the world to eradicate the disease through the slaughter and vaccination of cattle. It is important to highlight that, as a result of the preventive work that has been carried out for half a century, to date the disease has not re-entered national territory.

The director of the CPA, Roberto Navarro López, said that the Commission has a presence in all the states, with 88 veterinarians who are dedicated to promoting timely notification, visiting livestock producers, giving talks and teaching courses in universities and clinics, which together add up to more than 16,000 contact points where epidemiological surveillance is applied.

In addition to the Cuajimalpa facilities, the CPA has 12 molecular biology laboratories strategically distributed in different parts of the country, and now SENASICA working on the construction of a biosafety level 4 unit for the handling and containment of extremely dangerous pathogens.

At the end of the tour, the chief director of SENASICA and the general directors of Animal Health, Juan Gay Gutiérrez; of Plant Health, Francisco Ramírez y Ramírez; of Agrifood, Aquaculture and Fisheries Safety, Amada Vélez Méndez; and of Plant Health Inspection, Jorge Luis Leyva Vázquez, held bilateral meetings with the international representatives to fine-tune each country's trade exchange agendas.

During the meetings with European Union countries, priority was given to issues such as the regionalization of ASF-free areas with a view to increasing the marketing of pork meat, the authorization of new Federal Inspection Type (TIF) plants that export beef, pork, and poultry to those regions, and the

specifications for post-mortem inspection of animals that is requested by the Mexican government to its trading partners.

The French representatives also explained to the Mexican officials their intention to establish greater cooperation between diagnostic laboratories in both countries and to strengthen the exchange between technicians, with a view to standardizing procedures.

Meanwhile, with Latin American countries, such as Ecuador and Brazil, the products on the waiting list for negotiation were reviewed in order to establish dates on which risk analysis could begin in order to strengthen trade in agri-food products.