Leptospira Vaccine Potency Testing
2018 Updates on Reducing Hamster Usage

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Live Animal Test

- Virus-Serum-Toxin Act
  - Enforced by APHIS-Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB)
  - *Leptospira* bacterin potency testing is mandated under 9 CFR §113.101-113.104
    - Syrian Hamsters are very sensitive to *Leptospira*
    - Used as part of the standard regulatory test for *Leptospira* vaccine potency
4 Groups of Hamsters

• Controls
• Test animals
• Back-titration animals  
  – To create virulent challenge strains
• Those to maintain ‘fresh’ virulent strains
Creation of Challenge Inoculum

Back-titration hamsters:

- *In vivo* passaging: 4 groups of 5 hamsters injected with serial dilutions of a serogroup to estimate $\text{LD}_{50}$

- **Symptoms**: Hemorrhage (nasal and urine), and death
  - 5% display neurologic ataxia as a result of hepatic failure
  - 33% display no symptoms before becoming moribund
Live Animal Potency Test of *Leptospira* Vaccines

**Overview**

- **Vaccinate**
- **Wait 14 - 18 days**
- **Challenge w/Leptospira**
- **Observe 14 days**
- **Count survivors**

**Animal Numbers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vaccinates</th>
<th>Challenge Controls</th>
<th>Concurrent Challenge (LD&lt;sub&gt;50&lt;/sub&gt; Titration)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
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Results: 14 Days Post-Challenge

• A valid test requires 80% mortality in controls

• The vaccine test batch is deemed potent if 80% of the vaccinates survive
Hamster Numbers Add Up!

• Example: A canine vaccine vial with 3 serogroups
  - 20 Back-titration hamsters x 3 serogroups = 60
  - 20 hamsters for live animal test x 3 serogroups = 60
    Total = 120 hamsters

• Now consider the numbers of hamsters needed for batch testing vials of vaccines for dogs, cattle, and swine!
Maintenance of Virulent Strains

- **Note:** Once virulent strains are created, they need to be maintained in a live animal so ‘freshly’ prepared virulent cultures can be made
  - Approximately 46-50 hamsters/week
PARTNERING TO REDUCE HAMSTER USAGE

APHIS-CENTER FOR VETERINARY BIOLOGICS

NAL-ANIMAL WELFARE INFORMATION CENTER

APHIS-ANIMAL CARE
Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB)

- Initiatives that support the 3Rs (*replace, refine, reduce*)
  - **2013**: Exemption to use *in vitro* ELISA test developed by CVB instead of the codified test
  - **2015**: Exemption to eliminate back-titration hamsters for *L. canicola* & *L. icterohaemorrhagiae*
  - **2017**: Exemption to eliminate back-titration hamsters for *L. pomona* & *L. grippotyphosa*
  - **2018**: Cryopreservation of virulent challenge serotypes
Enzyme-linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA)

- Replaces the codified *in vivo* test
  - No live animals needed
- *In vitro* ELISA antigen quantification methods have been developed and validated by CVB for serogroups:
  - *L. pomona*
  - *L. canicola*
  - *L. icterohaemorrhagiae*
  - *L. grippotyphosa*
Enzyme-linked Immunosorbent Assay
Veterinary Services: Memorandum No. 800.102

- **2013**: Guidance on using the ELISA test
  
  - Provides information on this alternative to in vitro potency assays
  
  - Provides information on reagents available from CVB
Supplemental Assay Methods (SAM)

- Protocols for *in vitro* potency assays using the ELISA as compared to a suitable non-expired reference
  - SAM 624: *L. interrogans* serogroup Pomona
  - SAM 625: *L. interrogans* serogroup Canicola
  - SAM 626: *L. kirschneri* serogroup Grippotyphosa
  - SAM 627: *L. interrogans* serogroup Icterohaemorrhagiae
Exemption requirements

- Firms must obtain an exemption from CVB before using the ELISA.
  - Use of ELISA is optional

- Firms must validate the potency assays for their products and submit data to CVB for acceptance
Elimination of Back-titration Hamsters

2015 APHIS-CVB Notice # 15-13
• Option to remove back-titration hamsters from *in vivo* potency tests for serogroups *L. canicola* and *L. icterohaemorrhagiae*
• Must apply to CVB for an exemption to the *in vivo* test’s titration requirement

2017 APHIS-CVB Notice # 17-06
• Option to remove back-titration hamsters from *in vivo* potency tests for serogroups *L. pomona* and *L. grippotyphosa*
• Must apply to CVB for an exemption to the *in vivo* test’s titration requirement

*Removal of back-titration hamsters can reduce animal use by 50%*
2018: Cryopreservation of Virulent Serogroups

Cryopreserved Serogroups
CVB has made available virulent serogroups *L. canicola*, *L. pomona*, *L. grippotyphosa*, and *L. icterohaemorrhagiae* such that the live animal is not needed to maintain strains.


Cryopreservation Protocol
CVB has created a protocol to be used by any company that wishes to cryopreserve strains on their own.


*Potential elimination of ~2600 animals/yr./facility*
*15-20 yr. use of cryopreserved strains*
Animal Care

Currently monitoring hamster usage of companies that produce an APHIS approved *Leptospira* biological

- Part of USDA commitment to ICCVAM
- Monitoring via the Annual report (APHIS form 7023)
- Companies manufacturing APHIS approved products
  - The Veterinary Biologics Product Catalogue
**APHIS Form 7023**

### Hamsters

- **Category E:**
  - Pain unrelieved
  - Explanation required
Hamster Usage Under Category E

- Leptospira Potency Testing
- National Total


Number of Hamsters:

- 35000
- 30000
- 25000
- 15000
- 10000
- 5000
- 0
The Animal Welfare Act lists the National Agricultural Library (NAL) as a resource for information on improved methods of animal experimentation.

AWIC is the division of NAL that informs the research community about methods which could reduce or replace animals, or refine a study to minimize pain and distress.

CVB exemptions are listed on the web site [https://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/biologics-and-vaccine-testing](https://www.nal.usda.gov/awic/biologics-and-vaccine-testing)
Biologics and Vaccine Testing

Leptospira vaccine potency testing

USDA. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB)

- **Guidance for obtaining an exemption to the requirement for testing Leptospira bacterins for potency in hamsters**, Veterinary Services (VS) Memorandum No. 800.102 (2013) -- provides information on alternative in vitro potency assays (SAM) and on reagents available from the Center for Veterinary Biologics (CVB). Use of ELISA is optional. Firms are to obtain an exemption from CVB before using the ELISA. Firms must validate the potency assays for their products and submit data to CVB for acceptance.

- **Option to Remove Back-titration Hamsters from In Vivo Potency Tests for Leptospira Serogroups Canicola and Icterohaemorrhagiae, CVB Notice #15-13 (2015)** -- provides biologic licensees, permittees and applicants the option to remove back-titration hamsters from in vivo potency tests for Leptospira serogroups icterohaemorrhagiae and canicola. CVB would allow an exemption from the titration requirement in vaccination-challenge potency assays for these serogroups. Removal of the back-titration hamsters could reduce animal use by 50% when potency testing these fractions.

- **Option to Remove Back-titration Hamsters from In Vivo Potency Tests for Leptospira Serogroups Pomona and Grippotyphosa, CVB Notice #17-06 (2017)** -- provides biologic licensees, permittees and applicants the option to remove back-titration hamsters from in vivo potency tests for Leptospira serogroups pomona and grippotyphosa. CVB would allow an exemption from the titration requirement in vaccination-challenge potency assays for these serogroups. Removal of the back-titration hamsters could reduce animal use by 50% when potency testing these fractions.
Conclusion

• The USDA continuously works towards reducing hamster usage in *Leptospira* vaccine potency testing by:
  
  – Providing approved exemptions to the standard live animal test i.e. ELISA test and elimination of back-titration hamsters
  – Allowing the use of cryopreserved virulent strains
  – Providing information on alternatives in potency testing
  – Monitoring impact of CVB initiatives via annual reports of hamster usage
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