For Immediate Release:

Expanded building and testing capability strengthen Poultry Testing Laboratory

Grand Opening scheduled for September 22

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St. Paul, Minn. — The Minnesota Poultry Testing Laboratory (MPTL), located in Willmar, will re-open after an extensive building expansion project that began last December. Serving farmers, poultry producers and veterinarians in the area, the project will provide additional diagnostic testing labs and enhanced equipment and office spaces.

The new construction expanded the 20-year-old space from a 3,665 square-foot building to an 11,890 square-foot one. MPTL is a collaboration between the University of Minnesota, College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM), Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory and the Minnesota Board of Animal Health.

The public grand opening is scheduled for Thursday, September 22 from 2 – 5 p.m. with tours of the space and a visit from Governor Mark Dayton.

“This laboratory expansion will further enhance Minnesota’s ability to diagnose and respond to diseases impacting poultry,” said Governor Mark Dayton. “This facility is an important investment in our state’s $90 billion agricultural industry and the 340,000 people it employs. I thank the producers, industry officials, and legislators from around Minnesota for their leadership in securing state funding for it.”

The MPTL serves and supports Minnesota’s poultry industry, performing all of the required disease testing for the state’s poultry industry and conducting full-range poultry testing for salmonella, influenza, mycoplasma, and other poultry diseases. MPTL also serves as the Authorized Laboratory for the National Poultry Improvement Plan (NPIP) in Minnesota and is the center for management of Board of Animal Health (BAH) poultry programs.
“Poultry production in Minnesota has become more dynamic and the health control programs require more sophisticated diagnostic services,” said CVM Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Director, Jerry Torrison, DVM, PhD. “Together with the Board of Animal Health, we now have more space, technology and people to provide these critical services in the heart of Minnesota’s vital poultry industry.

The 2015 avian influenza outbreak highlighted the need for additional surge capacity in the state to respond to time-sensitive testing requirements such as those required by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for diagnosis and safe product movement out of control zones. This addition to the MPTL will provide the facilities needed to create a second accredited NAHLN laboratory that can perform the molecular diagnostic or polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests required for USDA avian influenza diagnosis and product movement.

"What began as a tragedy for our poultry industry in 2015, has transformed into innumerable opportunities for education and advancement. This laboratory stands as a testament to the dedication our state partners have to the health of Minnesota's poultry," said State Veterinarian Dr. Beth Thompson. "We don't want highly pathogenic avian influenza or any other illness to impact our birds, which is why we have this incredible expansion and talented staff here in Willmar."

“Minnesota’s 3,746 poultry farms generate more than $1.2 billion in annual economic impact, strengthening local communities and the statewide economy,” said Lt. Governor Tina Smith. “Our newly enhanced testing facility in Willmar will serve as another line of defense against diseases that threaten the health of Minnesota’s poultry industry and the financial well-being of Minnesotans who depend upon it.”

The 2015 Minnesota Legislature provided an appropriation of $ 8.5 million, which fully funded the project.

Specific enhancements include:

- The new addition is on one floor and consists of laboratories, offices, conference rooms and break room space. The existing building has been re-purposed for additional laboratory space.
- The new facility incorporates a sample delivery room; necropsy lab; media prep lab; bacteriology and serology lab; sample process & extraction lab; PCR testing lab; master mix lab; and autoclave room.
- The lab spaces have new equipment such as: chemical fume hoods, biosafety cabinets; PCR machines; centrifuges; sample vortex machines; -80 degree and -20 degree freezers; and refrigerators.

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