

ACOA Announces \$ 1.9 million Expansion Funding of Veterinary Laboratory Quality Assurance Program



Research Team and colleagues for recently awarded ACOA-AIF project entitled " *Veterinary Laboratory Quality Assurance Program Expansion: Technology Innovation and Quality Assurance Accreditation* ". From left to right – **Dr Darcy Shaw** (Associate Dean, Professional Services), **Dr David Sims** (Biomedical Sciences), **Mr Dennis Olexson** (Diagnostic Services), **Hon Keith Ashfield** (Minister ACOA), **Dr Anne Muckle** (Pathology & Microbiology), **Dr David Groman** (Aquatic Diagnostic Services) and **Mr Mark Leggott** (Chief Librarian – UPEI). Not included in the picture **Dr Barb Horney** (Pathology & Microbiology).

The Honourable Keith Ashfield (pictured center above), Minister of National Revenue, Minister of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) and Minister for the Atlantic Gateway, announced funding on January 26 for seven research and development projects on Prince Edward Island – three of which are innovative projects of UPEI researchers. One of these projects entitled "Veterinary Laboratory Quality Assurance Program Expansion" was awarded to an interdisciplinary team comprised of members from the Atlantic Veterinary College Diagnostic Services, Dept. of Pathology & Microbiology, and Dept. of Biomedical Sciences, UPEI Library, and Genzyme Diagnostic PEI Inc. Through this project, the Veterinary Laboratory Association - Quality Assurance Program (VLA-QAP) will develop software and systems for the web-based delivery of an impartial, objective verification program for veterinary labs to verify and assure diagnosis. As a result, the Diagnostic Services at AVC, in conjunction with its partner Genzyme Diagnostics PEI Inc., will be able to provide subscribing labs with identical quality assurance evaluations,

while eliminating issues surrounding the shipment of biological materials across the border. This project, with total estimated costs of \$1.9 million, will receive approximately \$1 million from the Atlantic Innovation Fund over a three-year period

New Faculty Member



Dr Mark Fast is the new Novartis Research Chair in Fish Health. Mark is excited to be back in Canada after spending 3 years as an Assistant Professor at the Marine Animal Disease Lab at Stony Brook University, NY. He is also very happy to be back at AVC. Mark completed an MSc with Dr John Burka in 2001, before attending Dalhousie University, where he completed his PhD in 2005. Mark's interests lie within the fields of comparative immunology and parasitology, specifically Mark has done extensive work on the salmonid pathogen, *Lepeophtheirus salmonis*. This is an area of research he initially started at AVC, and hopes to continue here in the years to come. He is also currently characterizing the life cycle, of perhaps the most ancient of copepod parasites of fish, *Dichelesthium oblongum*, which is a specific ectoparasite to sturgeon species in the Atlantic.

Our Alumni

Former graduate student **Julia Mullins** has enjoyed a successful career in fish health management since receiving her MSc degree from AVC/UPEI in 1996. Julia's thesis, "Development of an immunohistochemical stain to detect heavy metal contamination in biological materials", was mentored by former faculty member Dr Carmen Fuenteabla. During Julia's tenure at AVC, she also gained valuable experience in morphologic fish pathology. Julia was front and center as Provincial Aquaculture Veterinarian during the 1996-1998 outbreak of Infectious Salmon Anemia that decimated the salmon farming industry in New Brunswick. Julia graduated from the Ontario Veterinary College with a DVM in 1992, and from the AVC with a MSc in 1996. Since February 2008, Julia has been working as a researcher in fish health at the Skretting Aquaculture Research Centre in Stavanger, Norway where she lives with her husband and two children. Formerly she practised as a fish health veterinarian for private aquaculture companies (Pan Fish Canada, Heritage Salmon) with aquaculture sites on both coasts of Canada and in the US for several



years. She has also worked for the provincial government in Ontario as a fish health biologist and for the provincial government in New Brunswick as their fish health veterinarian. Julia can be contacted at E-mail:

julia.mullins@skretting.com

Dr Juan Carlos Rodriguez-Lecompte DVM, MSc (Colombia) completed his PhD at AVC in our department under the supervision of Dr Fred Kibenge in 2001. After finishing his PhD in Molecular Virology, Dr Rodriguez-Lecompte started a postdoctoral fellowship and research associate position at the Centre for Gene Therapeutics at McMaster University. During this time he worked on cancer vaccines using immune cells to induce tumoral regression in humans and dogs. In 2007, Juan Carlos moved to Winnipeg and started his faculty position as Assistant Professor in Avian Immunology in the Department



of Animal Science, University of Manitoba. He is teaching several courses including Avian and Poultry Production Systems and Management, Diseases of Poultry, and Avian Immunology. His research focuses on nutritional immunology particularly on the modulation of the mucosal immune system in the avian intestine. His goal is to understand the fundamental mechanisms by which diet can influence the immune response. He is also developing a DNA vaccine for Avian Influenza virus using inducible promoters, and currently Juan Carlos has one PhD and three MSc students. He has published several papers on topics associated with his research. Apart from his teaching and research, Dr Rodriguez is the Head of the Laboratory of Immunology, Director of the Poultry Unit, and member of the Technical Committee of the Genetic Bases for Resistance and Immunity to Avian Diseases. Since 2008, Dr Rodriguez-Lecompte is also an Adjunct Professor and Graduate Faculty in the Department of Health Management at AVC, serving on the Supervisory Committee of Dr. Alejandro Ceballos, PhD candidate in Health Management.

CCWHC offers case submission and field necropsy workshop



On February 2, members of the Canadian Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre (CCWHC) **Drs Pierre-Yves Daoust, Scott McBurney, María Forzán**, and wildlife technician **Darlene Weeks**, presented a workshop to Conservation Officers and Biologists of the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources (NS DNR). The workshop aimed at communicating to field personnel the best way to submit animals for necropsy examination as well as how to perform field necropsies on their own. The Pathology Laboratory in Truro graciously allowed the AVC team the use of their facilities, both for the power point presentations and for the necropsy demonstration. The workshop was requested by then Director of DNR, Julie Towers, who is very supportive of CCWHC's work in the Maritimes. Over 25 DNR staff attended the workshop, which was well received. **Photo:** Darlene Weeks (right) with former NS DNR Director Julie Towers (left).

Congratulations



Congratulations to **Dr Fred Kibenge** who has been appointed to the editorial board of Journal of Biomedicine and Biotechnology. This is a peer-reviewed, open access Hindawi journal that publishes original research articles as well as review articles in the whole spectrum of animal and plant biosciences. Dr Kibenge is one of the editors for the virology section. According to 2008 Journal Citation Reports released by Thomson Scientific (ISI) in 2009, the journal presently has an Impact Factor of 2.563

<http://www.hindawi.com/journals/jbb/editors.html>

Recent Publications

Chérif N, Gagne N, Groman, D, Kibenge, F, Iwamoto F, Yason C, Hammami S. Complete sequencing of Tunisian redspotted grouper nervous necrosis virus betanodavirus capsid gene and RNA-dependent RNA

polymerase gene. Journal of Fish Diseases 2010; 33: 231-240

Special Department Seminars

Dr. Bassem Allam, Seminar title: QPX disease in the hard clam *Mercenaria mercenaria*, from early days to the genomics era. Monday, March 01, 2010.

Dr. Fabiola Akaishi, Seminar title: Are the levels of pesticides in the marine environment a concern for two crustaceans species? Wednesday March 10, 2010.

Dr. John Darling, Seminar title: Tracking aquatic invaders: using molecular genetics to understand the introduction and spread of non-native species. Thursday, March 11, 2010.

Theses Defense and Upcoming Events

Mebrahtu Araya, PhD Thesis Defense, Monday, March 01, 2010.

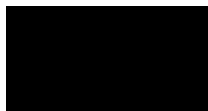
Sarah Clark-Stewart, PhD Thesis Defense, Friday, March 12, 2010.

Dante Mateo, PhD Thesis Defense, Monday March 29, 2010.

The "Prato Conference on the Pathogenesis of Bacterial Diseases of Animals" Monash Prato Campus, Prato Italy October 6-9, 2010. For further information please visit the [official web site](#).

Important Deadlines

1. Applications for Residency/MVSc Training in Wildlife Pathology: March 31, 2010.
2. Proposals for Pfizer Grant for Innovation in Teaching Methodology: March 15, 2010.
3. Complete files for Merit Awards for Scholarly Achievement: Monday, March 8, 2010.



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For comments or suggestions for our newsletter, please contact Alfonso Lopez

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