

UNL lab works to stop diseases' spread

■ **The Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratories handles more than 17,000 cases of diseases.**

By **LINDSAY HENSHILWOOD**
Staff writer

E. coli and cataracts are diseases about which little is known, but through research at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratories, researchers are gaining more insight into the diseases.

The lab handles more than 17,000 cases of viral and bacterial diseases affecting mainly animals, but that is not where it ends, said Rodney

Moxley, UNL professor of veterinary and biomedical sciences.

The professors in the lab conduct mostly agricultural research. They work closely with similar facilities in conjunction with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Moxley said.

The lab also acts as a teaching aid to farmers, at a cost, for finding out what is wrong with their animals.

Most of the research is done through animal autopsies, where researchers find out their cause of death and how the animal caught the diseases.

The cases are mostly local because the animals have to be brought into the laboratories by the farmers or their owners, but some people come from farther afield, Moxley said.

The results of the UNL research is more widely known because the uni-

versity works with other research institutions in the United States that conduct similar experiments, he said.

Moxley stressed the importance of connecting diseases such as E. coli 015787, found initially in cattle, to humans, especially where it poses the greatest risk.

This is done by conducting a series of tests on the animals and comparing the results to similar tests done with humans.

By doing this it is hoped that the risk of humans catching the disease will be reduced and the disease's spread to animals can be stopped, he said.

Many misconceptions exist about this E. coli in particular - few know that it is simply carried by animals and causes major problems only if it is transferred to humans, Moxley said.

It is hoped that with resources such as the large well-equipped laboratories that are available at UNL, more can be discovered about this disease and others, Moxley said.

This could lead to a reduction in the number of misconceptions that exist about the diseases.

This in turn will hopefully prevent the far-reaching effects that can be associated with the viruses and bacterium currently under study, Moxley said.

Another professor at work in the UNL lab is Marjorie Lou, a UNL professor of veterinary and biomedical sciences, who works with cataracts affecting humans.

She is researching to find out what causes them and says that she has had a lot of success.

The tests she does do not involve

live animals, as all the tests are done on pig lenses from the slaughter house.

The research has shown that the main risk factor associated with cataracts is cigarette smoking, as nicotine is particularly harmful. Another factor is oxidation, where it is hydrogen peroxide that affects the eyes.

Placing the lenses in a test tube with the harmful substances, Lou studies what changes in the lens including the biological function, metabolism and antioxidants.

Lou said the ultimate goal of her and the other professors' work "is to improve the quality of life for people and to compliment other research that is being done."

Further studies are being done into herpes, microbacterial infections that cause tuberculosis and bacterial infections of Legionnaires Disease.

2 die as peacekeepers, militiamen clash in E. Timor

DILI, East Timor (AP) - Australian peacekeepers repelled an ambush Wednesday, killing two anti-independence militiamen in the first clash since arriving 16 days ago. The violence came the same day Nobel Peace Prize winner Bishop Carlos Belo received a joyful welcome home.

Belo, who fled during last month's militia rampage through East Timor, is the first major independence figure to return since the violence that forced thousands from their homes and destroyed much of Dili, East Timor's capital.

Wednesday's clash began in the morning, when Australian troops shot the tires of a truck full of militiamen that drove past a roadblock in Suai, a militia stronghold near the border with Indonesia. Four passengers were injured.

Dozens of militia members were disarmed and taken by peacekeepers to the border with Indonesian-controlled West Timor, where thousands of anti-independence fighters have sought shelter along with an estimated 256,000 East Timorese refugees.

The ambush occurred nine miles east of the border, as the same peacekeepers returned to Suai

later in the day. Two peacekeepers were wounded.

"That small-vehicle convoy was ambushed by an unknown number of people with firearms. The soldiers immediately entered a counter-ambush drill," Australian army Maj. Gen. Peter Cosgrove, head of the international force known as Interfet, told reporters in Dili.

The incident confirmed security concerns the peacekeepers have expressed as they have fanned out across East Timor.

"This is the first time that Interfet soldiers have been wounded by enemy action. It is the first time that Interfet has been called upon, regrettably, to take lethal action against an adversary," Cosgrove said.

The militias have been massing in West Timor and have repeatedly threatened to launch guerrilla attacks and retake East Timor.

At the airport in Dili, Belo smiled broadly as he was embraced by Roman Catholic nuns, priests and others after stepping off a private plane from Darwin, Australia. He fled East Timor on Sept. 7. He then traveled to the eastern city of Baucau,

where joyous crowds threw flowers and sang hymns. At a church service, he called on thousands of East Timorese who fled the violence to come home and rebuild their lives in peace.

He also described conditions in Dili, which was damaged when militias backed by the Indonesian military went on a rampage after East Timor's overwhelming vote for independence Aug. 30.

"It is worse than hell," he said. Following the U.N.-sponsored referendum, Belo's Dili home was burned and refugees who had sought shelter there were killed. Others were rounded up by Indonesian troops.

Belo shared the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize with Jose Ramos Horta for their peaceful struggle for East Timorese independence.

In Dili, a U.N. official announced Wednesday the first of the refugees who fled to West Timor - many reportedly at gunpoint - would be repatriated Friday.

About 180 people were to arrive by air from Kupang, West Timor's capital. Later groups would follow by boat and road, said Lise Graside, a

humanitarian aid coordinator.

The World Food Program said Wednesday it would begin distributing food to refugees in West Timor.

Kelly also confirmed reports that a letter smuggled out of West Timor claimed militias there were raping and murdering refugees in a tiny East Timor enclave that is separated from the rest of the province.

In London, meanwhile, Horta criticized the United Nations on Wednesday for being too slow in providing humanitarian aid and security to hundreds of thousands of homeless refugees.

"We are not satisfied with slow deployment ... We are not satisfied with the slow progress in terms of aid in humanitarian assistance," Horta said during a news conference.

In Washington, the Clinton administration expressed support for a proposal by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the United Nations to take control of all government functions in East Timor. But a U.S. spokesman said Wednesday the cost and some other issues had to be studied.

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