



Please describe the **importance and objectives** of a veterinarian filling this shortage situation as well as being located in the community, area, state/insular area, or position requested above (limit your response to 1500 characters).

There is a critical lack of veterinarians in food animal veterinary pathologist in NJ. The NJ Department of Agriculture's Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory (NJ AHDL) is the only laboratory in NJ dedicated to the testing of specimens to diagnose diseases of food animals; and provide testing for the export of animals and live animal products. A veterinary pathologist would benefit the entire NJ; provide surge capacity for the national disease surveillance and detection programs, and contribute to the success of national control and eradication programs. This enables New Jersey and US to have a rapid, effective response to animal health emergencies, including foot-and-mouth disease and other foreign animal diseases and to protect the food supply and our economy. This position would serve entire NJ and bordering areas of PA, NY, and DE since the NJ AHDL receives submission from these areas. In NJ, we have identified officially 56 poultry farms, with 155,485 backyard birds; one egg-laying facility of 1.5 million birds; 119 cattle farms with 7,621 head; 32 small swine farms with 371 head; 11 food-waste feeding swine farms with 4,480 head; 43 small ruminant farms with 637 head; and 9 livestock slaughter facilities that would benefit from this position.

Please describe the **activities** of a veterinarian meeting this shortage situation in the community, area, state/insular area, or position requested above (limit your response to 1500 characters or less).

The VMLRP veterinarian would be working in the AHDL's necropsy facility, which is the only necropsy facility in US's most densely populated NJ-NY area. A Veterinary pathologist is often the first to recognize a new disease or health hazard of food animals. This veterinarian meeting the shortage criteria would serve the public by improving and protecting animal and public health by diagnosing diseases in food animals of New Jersey and bordering areas of neighboring states, thereby maintaining herd health and establishing the risk to humans consuming animal products. The VMLRP veterinarian would provide diagnostic veterinary pathology services, obtain case histories from animal owners and veterinarians submitting specimens (e.g. animal bodies, tissues, feed etc.) for diagnostic evaluations. The VMLRP veterinarian would conduct detailed necropsy examination, biopsy examination, and analyze body fluids to diagnose presence and stage of disease in animals, and probable source of contamination or infection. This veterinarian would be invaluable in providing services in support of federal and state disease surveillance programs, and foreign animal disease reporting. This veterinarian would provide outreach services by interacting with agents of livestock, poultry and other allied agricultural industries, county extensions agents, vocational agriculture teachers/students, and other entities.

Please describe any past efforts to recruit and retain a veterinarian in the shortage situation identified above (limit your response to 750 characters or less).

The NJ Department of Agriculture has reached out to Rutgers University requesting Animal Science professors to check if they know of graduates that were accepted into Veterinary Schools and recently graduated to consider food animal practice in this underserved rural area, but to date, there has been no response. The NJVMA was also contacted, but again, there was no response. Veterinary pathologists are in short supply and in NJ there is competition with the large pharma industry. The incentive of the VMLRP is and attractive to new pathologists and will facilitate keeping a hired pathologist on staff. The NJ Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory has state of the art facilities that will entice recruits to stay in the position.

Please describe the risk of this veterinarian position not being secured or retained. Include the risk(s) to the production of a safe and wholesome food supply and to animal, human, and environmental health not only in the community but in the region, state/insular area, nation, and/or international community (limit your response to 2000 characters or less).

NJ's location and its demographic make it vulnerable to introduction of foreign animal diseases. NJ and neighboring regions have been determined by USDA-APHIS-VS-CEAM to be at high risk for the introduction of CSF. This is due in part to the garbage fed swine industry in NJ, the high immigrant population, and the proximity of several large international ports. If the position is not filled, NJ will be at a greater risk of not detecting and responding timely to foreign, emerging, and zoonotic animal diseases and therefore causing a great deal of harm to the state and national agricultural industry. This has huge negative international implications when outbreaks of reportable disease occur and international embargoes of food animals and their products are implemented.

The lack of this position can also increase public health threat since early detection of diseases in animals helps protect public from zoonotic diseases.

Additionally, lack of this position is jeopardizing the AHDL's member laboratory status with the USDA's National Animal Laboratory Network.

Unlike major Agricultural states, the laboratory testing of food animals is not significantly subsidized by the State of NJ, which is resulting in inadequate testing and passive surveillance as food animal owners are not willing to submit animals for costlier pathology services. One way to provide subsidized testing is hiring a qualified veterinary pathologist on NJ State funded position by leveraging the VMLRP program. This will help protect NJ's unique animal agriculture.

SAHO nominator must check both boxes below in order for NIFA to consider this nomination for official designation

- By checking this box, I affirm that this form represents a nomination and is subject to NIFA review and approval.
- By checking this box, I affirm that it is my professional opinion that this is a bona fide food supply or public health-related veterinary shortage situation. I affirm due diligence has been invested to identify this area as a shortage situation of at least moderate priority (severity).

Authorized State or Insular Area Animal Health Official or designee:

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