

# The Herald Journal

## 3 new USTAR teams garner \$9M

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Utah State University researchers are investigating ways to stop outbreaks of serious animal-related diseases like swine flu and brucellosis.

The Veterinary Diagnostics and Infectious Disease (VDID) team is one of three new USU USTAR teams announced Monday.

The others include Interactive Design for Instructional Applications and Simulations (IDIAS), which will create simulations that train emergency response teams; and the Institute for Intuitive Buildings (I2B), which will focus on reducing the energy used in buildings.

In total, the three teams garnered about \$9 million in state funding for the next five years, with \$5.1million going to VDID.

According to Ken White, VDID team member and head of USU's department of animal, dairy and veterinary sciences, his group is focused on finding faster ways to diagnose livestock diseases in an effort to prevent their spread.

White said the goal is to "increase the sensitivity and reduce the cost" of tests for livestock illnesses.

These screenings are a \$1 billion business in the U.S.

Bruce King, veterinarian for the state, said the future of agriculture depends "on the success of VDID efforts from a production agriculture standpoint, and from a bio-security and human health perspective."

Already, USU scientists have developed a molecular test for trichomonis, a vaginal infection that affects cattle. This year King's office will begin offering the molecular test as one of several options for screening stud bulls.

Other USU efforts will look at diagnosis of tuberculosis and brucellosis. The latter causes cattle to miscarry and can be spread to them by elk and buffalo. The Yellowstone area has struggled with the disease for years.

In addition, the VDID team could look into human treatments of viral infections like West Nile Virus and H1N1 flu.

USU has a long-standing Institute for Antiviral Research (IAR) that will work with three new USTAR scientists on these types of projects.

John Morrey, a research professor in animal, dairy and veterinary sciences and a VDID team member, stressed the three scientists have not yet been hired and he is unsure what direction they will go with their research.

He added that IAR will assist them on whatever they choose to study in addition to continuing its own work.

“Because of our experience with antiviral drug development, that will help USTAR faculty and synergize with them in helping them develop products,” Morrey said.

With the addition of VDID and the two other research groups, Utah State has a total of nine USTAR teams. There are 13 teams at the University of Utah.

The Utah Legislature created USTAR (the Utah Science Technology and Research initiative) in 2006 with the goal of commercializing research done at USU and the U of U.

“What’s also exciting is to see a convergence of activity and collaboration between USU, the University of Utah, and other higher education institutions in the state to solve some of the world’s biggest issues,” said USTAR Governing Authority chair Dinesh Patel.

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