

CVM Pathology Lab

Chases Down Clues

By Patti Drapala

When presented with a mysterious animal death, a group of dedicated technologists at Mississippi State University's College of Veterinary Medicine spend their time looking for a few good clues.

By working together over the years in the Clinical Pathology Laboratory, Missy Bolin, Heather Peavy, Nicole McBrayer, Margaret Sanborn and Aleah Arney have a camaraderie that allows them to quickly provide information necessary for diagnosis and treatment.

"Many times we know what's probably wrong with an animal before the veterinarian actually does because we analyze the samples and see the clinical evidence first," Bolin said. "We don't know what the results may be because the treatment is determined by the clinician."

The main purpose of the laboratory is to focus on pathology, or the cause, development and consequence of diseases, but the seriousness of their job does not drain the life out of the staff. The group gets together to celebrate birthdays, holidays and brown-bag lunches.

"We really enjoy working with one another, and sometimes we finish each other's thoughts or sentences because we've been a team for 3 years," Arney said.

The laboratory is part of CVM's Department of Pathobiology and Population Medicine, but staff members have opportunities to assist specialists in different situations. These situations include:

- An oncologist wanting to know if an animal patient is healthy enough to withstand a new treatment;
- A small, private veterinary clinic needing special diagnostic services for a patient; and
- A project manager needing health-care maintenance of animals on the MSU South Farm.

Second-year veterinary students add to their clinical pathology knowledge by working in the laboratory for one summer, Bolin said. Their assistance allows the lab to provide 24-hour service to the veterinary hospital at peak periods.

While the staff must spend most of their time in the laboratory running tests for analysis, they aren't so far removed from caring about the animal patients.

"If an animal has been at CVM for a long time, we know the name because we see it on the lab sheets," said Sanborn. "Even though we don't see the animals, we still build bonds with them."



The CVM Clinical Pathology Lab staff includes, from left, Nicole McBrayer, Aleah Arney, Missy Bolin, Margaret Sanborn and Heather Peavy.