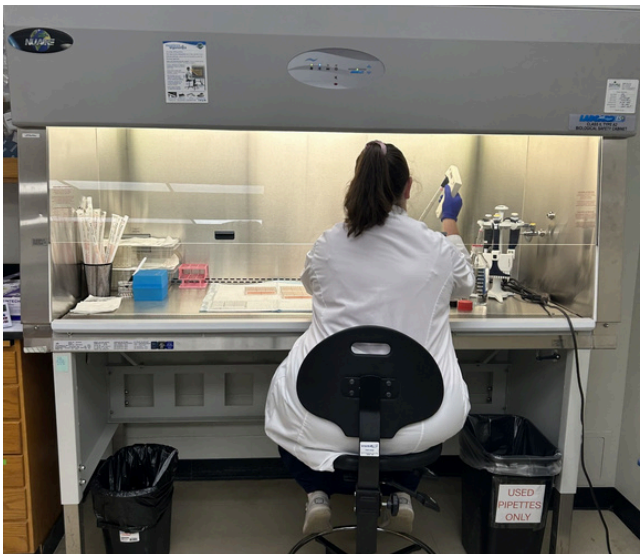


The Aubieclave Report

AUBURN UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE



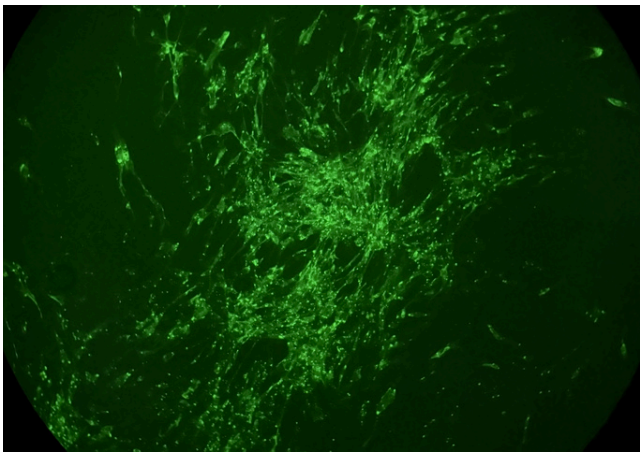
THE DISCOVERY SPOTLIGHT

The Serology-Virology Diagnostic Lab

Behind every test result is a team committed to accuracy, reliability, and service. The Serology-Virology Laboratory plays a critical role in supporting animal health, veterinary diagnostics, and international animal movement through specialized testing services that reach far beyond Auburn University.

The laboratory serves veterinarians, researchers, animal owners, and diagnostic partners by providing high-quality serologic and virologic testing that guides patient care, monitors disease exposure, evaluates vaccine responses, and meets regulatory requirements for animal travel. What may seem like a routine laboratory service can have life-changing implications for clients, whether by helping a veterinarian diagnose disease, supporting research, or ensuring a beloved pet can safely accompany its owner across international borders.

GIVE TO PATHOBIOLOGY

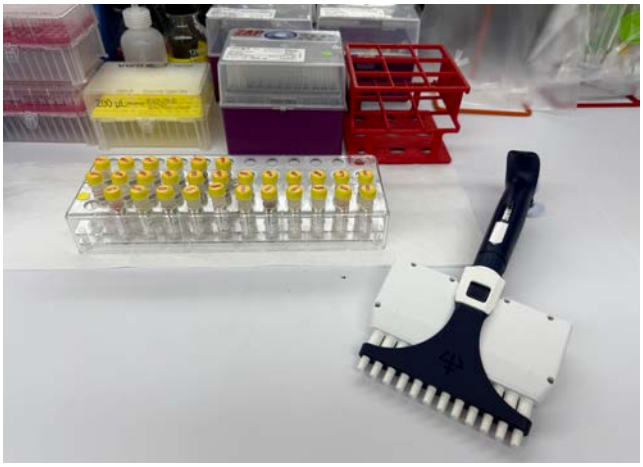


A significant portion of the laboratory's work focuses on rabies serology, including the FAVN test (pictured left) used for international pet travel and the RFFIT test used to assess vaccine response. The laboratory also performs a variety of serological tests for infectious diseases that help veterinarians make informed decisions about patient care. What makes the laboratory particularly unique is the breadth of testing it performs and the expertise required to maintain those services. According to the team, **"Our lab is somewhat unusual in the range of testing we perform, and in the experience our staff has developed performing these methods."** They note that while rabies antibody testing is a major component of their work, they also maintain specialized infectious disease assays that require **"careful technique and consistent interpretation."**

The laboratory's role extends beyond producing test results. Because many submissions are tied to international pet travel requirements, accuracy in documentation and reporting is just as important as the testing itself. The team works closely with regulatory expectations to ensure clients receive the information required for successful animal movement across international borders. As they describe it, **"Our work not only produces results, but we also must make sure the reporting meets the expectations of regulatory agencies and authorities."**

While much of their work occurs behind the scenes, they recognize that every result becomes part of a larger process involving veterinary care, research, animal movement, and disease management.

The laboratory has also achieved significant milestones in recent years. Among its proudest accomplishments was earning **ISO/IEC 17025:2017 accreditation** for its rabies serology testing program, including both FAVN and RFFIT testing.



The team describes this achievement as **"one of our most meaningful recent milestones"** and notes that it was **"a monumental team effort"** that strengthened and formalized many of the laboratory practices already in place. In addition, the laboratory has worked closely with the CVM-IIT group to improve its FAVN submission and reporting process. An upcoming online fillable submission form will streamline the process for veterinarians and

clients and serve as the official report provided to pet owners for travel purposes. **“This will make the process much more efficient for us and our clients,”** the team explains.



Behind these accomplishments is a close-knit team dedicated to quality, service, and supporting one another. The laboratory is administered by **Dr. Deepti Pillai**, who serves as Laboratory Section Head and provides leadership for the lab's diagnostic, quality, and strategic initiatives. The team also includes Terri Wood, Lab Manager; Tracey Land, Research Assistant IV; Dawn Looney, Quality Manager/Lab Assistant; and Kimberly Witherspoon, Lab Assistant III. The group describes itself as “a small 4-member team that works well together” and credits much of its success to collaboration and mutual support. **“We’ve learned how to rely on each other, use each person's strengths, and keep moving forward even with a demanding workload,”workload,”** they shared. Through the challenges of accreditation, process improvements, and day-to-day laboratory operations, the team has developed a strong culture of trust, respect, and teamwork that continues to drive its success.

The laboratory's global reach is reflected in a world map displayed within the lab, covered with pins marking locations from which FAVN samples have been received over the past year and a half. The display serves as a striking reminder of how the team's work connects Auburn to animal owners, veterinarians, and regulatory agencies around the world. Also prominently displayed is the laboratory's ISO/IEC 17025:2017 accreditation plaque, earned in July 2026, recognizing the team's commitment to quality and technical excellence. Adding a touch of personality to the workspace are the lab's unofficial "friends" - plush representations of Rabies Virus (red), Measles Virus (spotted), and Lyme disease bacteria (the curly one). Together, these displays reflect both the scientific expertise and team spirit that make the Serology-Virology Lab such an important part of Auburn's diagnostic service mission.

Serology-Virology Laboratory is accredited by the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) to ISO/IEC 17025:2017 for technical competence in the field of Biological Testing for RFFIT and FAVN Test Methods (Certificate Number: 7878.01)



Welcome to The Jungle!



Dr. Shridula Hegde

OUR NEW ASSISTANT CLINICAL PROFESSOR

The Department of Pathobiology is pleased to welcome Dr. Shridula Hegde as an Assistant Clinical Professor. Dr. Hegde earned a Bachelor of Science in Veterinary Science from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in 2021, followed by a Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree in 2025 and a Master of Public Health with a specialization in Veterinary Public Health in 2026 from The Ohio State University.

Dr. Hegde's professional interests span a wide range of areas, including One Health, public health, parasitology, preventive medicine, zoonotic and infectious diseases, global health, and veterinary education and training. Her interdisciplinary background reflects a strong commitment to advancing animal, human, and environmental health through collaboration, research, and education.

Outside of her professional responsibilities, Dr. Hegde enjoys discovering new restaurants and bakeries, staying active through fitness, and traveling. We are excited to welcome Dr. Hegde to the Pathobiology family and look forward to the knowledge, energy, and expertise she brings to our department!

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Trimming in Style: New Mopec Grossing Station Arrives

We are excited to welcome a brand-new Mopec Maestro Encore Grossing Station, the gold standard in pathology grossing safety and ergonomics.

Designed to support users of varying heights and workspace preferences, the station enhances comfort, efficiency, and laboratory safety. Its innovative SafeDraft™ Ventilation Technology helps minimize potential formalin exposure by directing airflow away from the user. This new addition provides our Pathobiology team with a safer, more modern workspace for specimen trimming and grossing, and we are grateful for the investment in our laboratory and personnel.

A special thank you to Dr. Sanjeev Narayanan and Dean Johnson for helping make a major upgrade possible for our department!



Pathobiology Enjoys Fall Outing to Pumpkins at Callaway

Faculty, staff, students, and families recently enjoyed a fall evening at Pumpkins at Callaway in Pine Mountain, Georgia. The group explored the seasonal displays, festive pumpkin exhibits, and illuminated walking trails while taking in the sights and sounds of autumn.

The outing provided a fun opportunity to relax, connect outside the workplace, and spend time together in a family-friendly setting. Events like these help strengthen our department's community and create lasting memories beyond the classroom, laboratory, and office.

Thank you to everyone who participated and helped make the trip an enjoyable fall adventure!



Dr. Paul Walz Selected to Serve on Presidential Academic Advisory Council

Congratulations to Dr. Paul Walz on his selection to serve as the College of Veterinary Medicine's elected representative on Auburn University's newly established Presidential Academic Advisory Council (PAAC).

Dr. Walz will help represent the voice and perspectives of CVM faculty and staff in discussions that support academic excellence, institutional decision-making, and shared governance across the university. His appointment reflects both his commitment to service and the strong engagement of our college's faculty, which had more nominees for the elected position than any other academic college at Auburn.

Please join us in congratulating Dr. Walz and thanking him for his willingness to serve Auburn University and the College of Veterinary Medicine in this important role.



Dr. Carlos Lopes Helps Uncover Case of Oak Toxicosis in Cattle

When a 4-year-old Angus-cross cow was admitted to Auburn's J.T. Vaughan Large Animal Teaching Hospital after suddenly refusing feed, experiencing breathing difficulties, and becoming unable to stand, veterinarians were faced with a challenging case.

Dr. Carlos Lopes helped investigate the cow's rapidly declining condition, which revealed severe kidney failure. Further examination identified the cause as oak toxicosis, a potentially fatal condition resulting from the consumption of oak leaves, buds, or acorns.

Congratulations to Dr. Carlos Lopes, who played a key role in investigating a complex bovine case that was later published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association.*



Kalpourtzidou Advances to Three Minute Thesis Finals

Congratulations to Aliki Kalpourtzidou, a graduate research assistant under Dr. Constantinos Kyriakis, on being selected as one of just 10 finalists in Auburn University's Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) Competition.

Competing against more than 60 graduate students from across campus, Kalpourtzidou advanced through the preliminary rounds with her presentation, *"From Oink to Achoo: A Potential Pandemic Flu."* The competition challenges students to explain complex research concepts to a general audience in just three minutes while demonstrating strong communication and engagement skills.

Kalpourtzidou will represent the College of Veterinary Medicine in the finals on November 5, where competitors will vie for top honors and the opportunity to advance to the regional competition. Congratulations, Aliki, and best of luck in the finals!



Apolloni Showcases Research in Three Minute Thesis Competition

Vinicius Apolloni, a graduate student under Dr. Miria Criado, recently participated in Auburn University's Three Minute Thesis (3MT®) Competition, presenting his research, *"How Do Chickens Fight Back Against Bird Flu?"*

The competition challenged more than 60 graduate students from across campus to explain their research and its significance to a general audience in just three minutes. Participants were evaluated on their ability to effectively communicate complex scientific concepts through engagement, comprehension, and presentation skills.

Congratulations to Vinicius on this accomplishment and for representing the college in this prestigious university-wide competition.



Dr. Laura Huber Hargrove Selected for Research Communications Fellowship

Dr. Laura Huber Hargrove, assistant professor of epidemiology, has been selected as a 2026-2027 Auburn University Research Communications Fellow.

A partnership between Auburn's Office of Communications & Marketing and the Office of the Senior Vice President for Research & Economic Development. The program helps 28 faculty researchers from Auburn's 12 colleges develop strategies and tactics to share their impactful work with broader audiences.

Dr. Huber Hargrove and her molecular epidemiology laboratory research team investigate animal-human-environment interactions on the spread and maintenance of antimicrobial resistance.



Dr. Bridgette Murphy Awarded Graduate Student Travel Fellowship

Congratulations to Dr. Bridgette Murphy, a third-year Pathobiology resident, on receiving a Graduate Student Council Travel Fellowship for November 2026. This competitive award will help support her travel and attendance costs as she presents her research at several upcoming conferences.

The fellowship is another well-deserved recognition of Dr. Murphy's hard work and dedication to advancing her research. As she continues to share her findings with the broader scientific community, this award highlights both the quality of her work and her growing impact in the field. Congratulations, Dr. Murphy, on this outstanding achievement!



A Spooktacular Patho Halloween!

Thank you to everyone who helped make Halloween a fun and festive day in Pathobiology! It was great to see so many faculty, staff, students, and residents showing off their creativity by dressing up and embracing the Halloween spirit.

From clever costumes to shared candy and treats, the day provided a welcome opportunity to connect, laugh, and enjoy a little seasonal fun together. Thank you to everyone who participated and helped make the celebration such a success. Your enthusiasm and team spirit are what make our department such a great place to work and learn. Happy Halloween!

Help us make dreams a reality!

Your impact begins here – choose the Auburn causes that are important to you. Whether you give to empower students through scholarships, drive groundbreaking research and life-changing outreach, or enrich the Auburn Experience, you are shaping our future.

https://aub.ie/PathoGift



PUBLICATIONS

Awtrey A, Santana-Pereira ALR, Bhimavarapu K, Iduu N, Cohen ND, Slovis N, Elam J, **Kyriakis C, Huber L, Wang C.** erm(46) copy number determines macrolide resistance in *Rhodococcus equi*. *J Am Vet Med Assoc.* 2026 Oct 23:1-8. doi: 10.2460/javma.26.07.0576. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 42915496. **https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42915496**

Belsare, A. V., and S. S. Ditchkoff. Opinion: Adapting to the challenges of wildlife management in the 21st Century.*Wildlife Society Bulletin.* 2026. e70068. **https://wildlife.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/wsb.70068**

Simonis MC, Vicente-Santos A, Lock LR, Dyer KE, Olbrys BL, Fenton MB, Sears KE, Volokhov DV, Simmons NB, Becker DJ. Validating Wing Biopsies for Blood-Borne Pathogen Characterization in Bats. *Mol Ecol.* 2026 Oct;35(19):e70560. doi: 10.1111/mec.70560. PMID: 42808891; PMCID: PMC13622386. **https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/42808891**

Publication information is downloaded from PubMed. We recognize that not all publications may be found on that site. Please let Liz Nowling know if your publication did not make the list, and it will be included in the next issue.

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Pathobiology Thanksgiving Potluck 2026

The Pathobiology Department is inviting faculty, staff, students, and retirees to gather for its annual Thanksgiving Potluck on **Thursday, November 19, 2026,** from **12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.** in the **Newsom Auditorium in the VEC.**

This year's celebration promises an afternoon filled with delicious food, door prizes, fun activities, and plenty of opportunities for fellowship. Participants are encouraged to bring a dish to share, whether it's a family favorite, a recipe that reflects their heritage, or simply something they enjoy making. The potluck is a chance to celebrate the diverse backgrounds that make up the Pathobiology community while enjoying time together outside the workplace!

To help us coordinate, please sign up with your food item using the link below:
aub.ie/pathothanks2026



Pathobiology Holiday Party 2026

The Pathobiology Department will wrap up the semester with a festive afternoon of desserts, fellowship, and holiday fun at the annual **Pathobiology Holiday Party** on **Thursday, December 10**, from **2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the Newsom Auditorium.**

Attendees are encouraged to bring a favorite dessert to share and participate in the department's annual Dirty Santa gift exchange by bringing one wrapped, anonymous gift valued at approximately $20.

This annual gathering is a wonderful opportunity for faculty, staff, students, and retirees to celebrate the season, connect with colleagues, and enjoy some holiday cheer before the year's end. We look forward to celebrating together and making the season bright!



Inaugural One Health Symposium

Join professionals, researchers, students, policymakers and community leaders for a day of discussion and learning at the inaugural **One Health Symposium on November 16.**

Hosted by the College of Veterinary Medicine in partnership with the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Public Health and the Alabama Department of Public Health, the event is free to attend, but registration is required.

Speakers will address a variety of challenges affecting animals, people and the environment and will offer perspective on everything from disease surveillance and emergency preparedness to epidemiology and biosafety.

Learn more and register here:
https://www.vetmed.auburn.edu/events/alabama-one-health-symposium/



Staff Council Professional Development Day 2026

Auburn University's Staff Council invites employees to participate in **Professional Development Day 2026** on **Thursday, November 19**, at the **Melton Student Center Ballroom.** This exciting event, themed *"Empowering Excellence: Leading with Purpose, Serving with Impact,"* will bring staff members together for a morning of learning, networking, and professional growth.

Attendees will enjoy engaging speakers, networking opportunities, a coffee and collaboration meet-and-greet, complimentary lunch, giveaways, and more. Whether you're looking to enhance your skills, connect with colleagues across campus, or gain fresh perspectives, Professional Development Day offers a valuable opportunity to invest in your personal and professional development.



Open Enrollment for 2027 Ends November 16

Open Enrollment (OE) is underway and continues **until 11:59 p.m. on Nov. 16.** You may enroll in, cancel, or modify your health, dental, vision, and other coverage elections for 2027.

To enroll, visit AU Access and look for the orange umbrella under Employee Benefits. Enrollment instructions are also available on the OE website.

Important Reminders

- This is your only opportunity to review or change your health insurance plan for 2027, unless you experience a Qualifying Life Event during the year, such as getting a new job, marrying, or having a child.
- This year's Open Enrollment requires actions to be completed by Nov. 16 to maintain certain benefits and avoid new charges. Specifically:
  - A $75 monthly spousal surcharge will apply unless you apply and qualify for the waiver.
  - Any existing vision benefits will end. You must re-enroll and choose a new network.

You must re-enroll in Health Care Flexible Spending Account or Dependent Care Flexible Spending accounts to continue enrollment in 2027.

If you have questions that are not answered on the Open Enrollment or Virtual Benefits Fair websites, please visit oe@auburn.edu for assistance.

IMPORTANT DATES & EVENTS

Next Faculty Meeting:

Dec. 9 in GH 168 from 1-3 PM

Next Staff Meeting:

Jan. 21st in VEC 246 from 10:30-11:30 AM

A list of official holidays for Auburn employees, including schedules for 2026, is available on the University Human Resources website.

2026 HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Holiday	Weekday(s) Observed	Date(s) Observed
New Year's Day	Thursday	Jan. 1, 2026
Martin Luther King Jr. Day (2026)	Monday	Jan. 19, 2026
Memorial Day	Monday	May 25, 2026
Juneteenth Day	Friday	June 19, 2026
Independence Day	Friday	July 3, 2026
Labor Day	Monday	Sept. 7, 2026
Thanksgiving	Wednesday-Friday	Nov. 25-27, 2026
Christmas*	Friday	Dec. 25, 2026

* In addition to the above dates for Christmas Day and New Year's Day, we will close campus on Friday, Dec. 18, 2026, at 4:45 p.m. and re-open on Monday, Jan. 4, 2027, at 7:45 a.m.

- Friday, Dec. 18, 2026: All offices will remain open and operating until 4:45 p.m.
- Monday, Jan. 4, 2027: All offices will re-open and resume operations at 7:45 a.m.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ALL NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS!

Cuadrado Guevara, Camila Andrea	**18-Nov**	**Sheffield, JoAnna N.**	**21-Nov**
Goyal, Deepika	**3-Nov**	**Suzuki, Satoshi**	**28-Nov**
Gulley, Stephen L.	**16-Nov**	**Wang, Chengming**	**11-Nov**
Hu, Yoonsung	**7-Nov**	**Whitt, Brittany E.**	**25-Nov**
Leyson, Christina	**23-Nov**		
Nichols, Jacob H.	**10-Nov**		
Pietruska, Andrea	**27-Nov**		
Sakkas, Dimitrios	**17-Nov**		



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