



## Atlantic Veterinary College Media Release

### Global experts study aquatic animal disease to help feed a hungry planet

**(Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, CANADA) July 23, 2010:** The Atlantic Veterinary College (AVC) at the University of Prince Edward Island and the National Veterinary Institute in Norway have joined forces to establish the world's only OIE Collaborating Centre for Epidemiology and Risk Assessment of Aquatic Animal Diseases.

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) confirmed the designation of the Centre during its annual general session in Paris in May 2010. OIE Collaborating Centres play a key role in the management of animal health issues and resulting impacts on the health of communities around the world. The OIE Collaborating Centre designation recognizes world leadership in aquatic epidemiological research for aquatic food production based at AVC and the National Veterinary Institute (Norway).

“Aquaculture is the fastest growing food sector in the world,” says Dr. Larry Hammell, Co-director of the OIE Collaborating Centre, Director of AVC’s Centre for Aquatic Health Sciences and Innovation PEI Industry Research Chair in Epidemiology for Aquatic Food Production.

“Increasingly, countries around the world are turning to aquatic species as a source of high quality food for their populations,” explains Hammell. “This requires healthy food animals from healthy aquatic ecosystems. Establishing this Collaborating Centre is a timely and necessary step in supporting the future of aquatic health management on a global scale.”

“This partnership between our two institutions is a very exciting opportunity to solidify even stronger linkages, and develop research and training programs for other aquatic food producing countries,” says Dr. Edgar Brun, Head of the Epidemiology Section, National Veterinary Institute (Norway) and Co-director of the OIE Collaborating Centre.

Researchers from a range of aquatic health-related disciplines including finfish, mollusc and crustacean field studies will be part of the Centre. The Centre will focus on evidence-based health management using epidemiology--the study of disease in populations--for aquatic health issues. It will also provide training for producers and scientists, conduct research involving local veterinarians and producers, and deliver services to the aquaculture industry and governments in areas such as:

- disease outbreak investigations and risk factor studies,
- surveillance and diagnostic test evaluation,

- disease control and clinical field trials,
- decision-support tools that deliver evidence-based outcomes to all levels of policy makers
- training of experts in aquatic epidemiology and evidence-based health management
- epidemiological risk assessment

“Ensuring a safe, sustainable and affordable supply of food is an ongoing issue for much of the world’s growing population,” says Dr. Brian Evans, Canada’s Chief Veterinary Officer and the country’s first Chief Food Safety Officer. “The establishment of the OIE Collaborating Centre for Epidemiology and Risk Assessment of Aquatic Animal Diseases is an important contribution to both food security and to the global economy. Given the standards and competence that must be demonstrated to achieve designation by the OIE, it speaks volumes of the expertise and scientific excellence resident at AVC and at Norway’s National Veterinary Institute.”

The establishment of this OIE Collaborating Centre formalizes a network of global experts and will greatly increase knowledge and capacity needed to solve health management issues involving aquatic species. In addition to improving the health of aquatic species, the Centre will provide the scientific basis to influence international standards and guide policy decisions at all levels, including groups such as fish farmers, veterinarians, subnational and federal governments.

The Atlantic Veterinary College and the National Veterinary Institute (Norway) are world-leading academic-based aquatic health institutions. In addition to the OIE Collaborating Centre for Epidemiology and Risk Assessment of Aquatic Animal Diseases, AVC is home to an OIE Reference Laboratory for Infectious Salmon Anaemia (ISA), a Canada Excellence Research Chair in Aquatic Epidemiology, an Aquatic Diagnostics Laboratory, and several centres of aquatic species expertise.

-30-

Media contact: Anna MacDonald, External Relations Officer, Atlantic Veterinary College, (902) 566-6786, amacdonald@upe.ca

## FACT SHEET

### OIE Collaborating Centre for Epidemiology and Risk Assessment of Aquatic Animal Diseases

Atlantic Veterinary College, University of Prince Edward Island

- First of its kind in the world; approved by World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) in May 2010
- Specific areas of focus include
  - disease outbreak investigations and risk factor studies
  - surveillance and diagnostic test evaluation
  - disease control and clinical field trials
  - decision-support tools to deliver evidence-based outcomes to all levels of policy makers
  - epidemiological risk assessment
- Partnership between AVC's Centre for Aquatic Health Sciences and National Veterinary Institute, Oslo, Norway. Co-directors: Dr. Larry Hammell, Director, AVC's Centre for Aquatic Health Sciences, and Innovation PEI Industry Research Chair in Epidemiology for Aquatic Food Production, and Dr. Edgar Brun, Head, Department of Epidemiology, National Veterinary Institute (Norway)
- Formalizes network of experts to solve health challenges in aquatic species
- Provides OIE and member countries with access to comprehensive epidemiological knowledge and expertise applied to aquatic health
- Involves veterinary and other epidemiologists and research scientists from aquatic health disciplines (finfish, mollusc, crustacean), with backgrounds in quantitative epidemiology, biostatistics, epi-informatics, health management research, ecosystem health, clinical investigation
- Health management using epidemiology (the study of disease in populations) for improving the health of aquatic animals
- Opportunities for collaborative research funding through access to international programs
- Increased opportunities for graduate student training in Canada and Norway at Masters and Doctoral levels
- Improved epidemiological training for aquatic health workers and producers in member countries, resulting in healthier aquatic species and the strengthening of the aquatics-based food industry and its ability to provide a high quality food source
- Increase the critical mass of epidemiology specialists available for aquatic food animals industries regionally, nationally and internationally