Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Accessioning Process Improvement (UIUC)

Business Case

The Receiving area is the starting point of all testing that occurs in the Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (VDL). Proper data entry, specimen handling and storage of the samples is essential to the quality of all test results. Each section of the laboratory depends on Receiving to perform these accessioning functions with accuracy and efficiency. Testing is delayed if samples and submission forms are not properly distributed to the required sections or if the case is not entered into the Vetstar Animal Disease Diagnostic System (VADDS) correctly.

Goal

Improve the overall efficiency of the testing process by reducing the number of errors in accessioning while maintaining or improving current pickup time schedule.

Approach

Established an understanding of the current process and related issues through process mapping and data collection. Analyzed the resulting information through various group exercises and developed a list of potential improvements. Prioritized improvement ideas and formalized an implementation plan.

Outcome

First Accelerated/RAPID process improvement project for the College of Veterinary Medicine and the first process improvement project to be lead by a College of Veterinary Medicine facilitator. Implemented 10 out of 12 recommendations identified through the project, focusing primarily on replacing batch process with continuous flow. Utilized 5S methodology to better organize and maintain receiving area.

Key Findings

- **Process lacked continuous flow, causing delays in data entry and testing.**
- **Organization of receiving, storage and pickup areas needed improvement.**
- **Several small technology upgrades were needed to lend efficiency to the process.**
- **Instances of over processing and opportunity for improved communication.**
- **Systemic problems with transfer of client/case information causing extended wait times.**

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Short-term Improvement Recommendations

1. **Implement continuous flow process in place of batching of samples –** reducing unnecessary delays in data entry and testing.
2. **Increase scanning capabilities and introduce dual displays in Receiving area –** increases productivity of staff and reduces wait time.
3. **Eliminate duplicate copies of lab submission forms –** increases productivity of staff by eliminating unnecessary work.
4. **Improve timeliness of sample splitting process.**
5. **Introduce better organization and documentation of specimens in the cooler area –** 5S area to improve efficiency of staff and provide them tools to maintain organization.
6. **Reschedule parasitology testing to alleviate resource strain on busiest days.**

Long-term Improvement Recommendations

1. **Work with vendor and Computing Services to evaluate and resolve scanning inefficiencies.**
2. **Reduce total number of VADDS clients by deactivating inactive and duplicate entries and introducing maintenance of the client list –** increases productivity of staff by reducing amount of data and ensuring viewable data is accurate and up-to-date.
3. **Fill vacant Veterinary Technician position with a Veterinary Assistant –** improve applicant pool and increase clerical capacity.

Implementation of Recommended Improvements

Implementation of all short term improvement recommendations has been completed. For long term improvements, the laboratory director has begun engaging the vendor and Computing Services regarding scanning inefficiencies, the business office has been actively working to reduce the inactive and duplicate client entries in VADDS, and the Veterinary Assistant position for Receiving is currently on campus for approval.