

Opening “Up” to a New Generation of Assays Leveraging the Latest Technology

Case Study

Midwest Laboratories

Perspectives by Ken Johnson,
Microbiology Supervisor





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Challenge	Solution	Impact
Need for accurate pet food testing method (and one that didn't deliver unnecessary false positives) as well as faster turnaround time	Leveraging bioMérieux's VIDAS® SPT testing method	Ability to deliver their clients a reliable test that delivers fast, accurate results, as well as open the door for future clients/business

Challenge

- Midwest Laboratories, based in Omaha, Neb., has built a reputation as an environmental laboratory offering a broad spectrum of testing capabilities within the agricultural, environmental, feed, food and fuel industries. The company provides clients throughout the United States with timely, accurate and defensible data and continues to expand in the areas of new methodology development and state-of-the-art instrumentation. The company's feed and pet food division offers more than 30 years of experience and features one of the largest feed labs in the country.

When one of its dry pet food clients faced some challenges with existing testing methods, including false positives with lateral flow technology, as well as a need for faster turnaround, Ken Johnson of Midwest Laboratories knew a change was needed.

“We turned to bioMérieux because we had a client that needed an accurate testing method with a quick turnaround. Our client's consultants suggested we use the VIDAS® UP Salmonella (SPT) technology.”

Solution

- When the suggestion to use bioMérieux's VIDAS® SPT testing method arose, Ken initially expressed concern about the system, viewing the VIDAS platform as dated. However, he quickly realized his view of VIDAS was what was dated, not the platform itself, with its new generation of assays based on the latest technology.

“I was very pleased with how it works. I like the flexibility of the system and how I can make it work with pet food needs.”

The recently introduced VIDAS® SPT solution utilizes recombinant bacteriophage (phage) proteins, which offer best-in-class specificity and sensitivity for the targeted capture and detection of *Salmonella* bacteria in food and environmental samples. The assay is able to detect low levels of contamination and is one of the most rapid and easy-to-use diagnostic tools available for the screening of *Salmonella* in environmental samples, standard and large-sized food samples. The technology provides an extremely simple one-step sample preparation, which reduces laboratory hands-on time and delivers results in as little as 19 hours, compared to reference methods that require up to three days (AOAC validated #071101).

Impact

- Food safety has always been an important part of laboratory analysis as it has the opportunity to evaluate testing procedures. Ken has seen a multitude of new technologies in pathogen testing and rapid turnaround, sensitivity, accuracy and ease of use and cost – all of which are important variables in adopting new technology. Midwest Laboratories' desire is to offer what the client needs in regard to timeliness, accuracy and sensitivity.

Both Midwest Laboratories and its pet food client that requested the VIDAS® SPT testing method see the benefits of the switch to this technology, according to Ken. He said the client no longer gets the phone calls or delays they experienced with the previous system. Instead, they know they're working with a reliable test that delivers fast, accurate results.

In addition, Midwest Laboratories appreciates the customer support it has received from bioMérieux.

“We’ve had several bioMérieux representatives visit us and contact us, so we get the technical support we need. We know exactly who to call if we need any sort of assistance.”

Midwest Laboratories also expects to see results in the form of additional clients. Ken said that because the company now offers the VIDAS® SPT platform, he is hopeful that it may encourage consideration by other businesses that haven't used the lab in the past. In other words, the VIDAS SPT platform allows Midwest Laboratories to expand its capabilities.

About the Author

Ken Johnson joined Midwest Laboratories Inc. in 1993 and has been the Microbiology Supervisor since that date. He started in animal agriculture and food production and switched careers to laboratory analysis in 1989 while he was a graduate student at Iowa State University.

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