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Vetsina seeks investment partner

Vetsina Animal Diagnostics is seeking up to £3 million from investment partners to commercialise its microRNA-based diagnostic tests for the animal health market.

Vetsina, formed last year as a joint venture between Roslin Technologies and Destina Genomics, and initially focused on detecting microRNA biomarkers for infections, illnesses and disease in animals.

It is on target to launch its first product in Q3 this year, with subsequent launches scheduled in 2022. Chief executive Dr Simon Wheeler says initially the company plans to work through distribution partners in the UK, then further afield.

“To support our commercial effort, we are seeking investment partners to work with us as we believe our unique technology, exciting innovation pipeline and business plan easily justifies the level of investment we are seeking.

“Our ambition is to develop and commercialise four diagnostic tests in infectious disease, oncology, metabolic disease and fertility. With this success, we anticipate being an attractive target for leading diagnostic companies and the diagnostic divisions of the main animal health companies.”

Research partners

Alongside its fundraising efforts, Vetsina is also seeking new research partners. While it currently has three new research projects identified, with two in the early proof-of-concept stage, Dr Wheeler says the company is "open to other collaborations with parties interested in this kind of exploratory research".

Vetsina does not simply want to take research from academia and turn it into commercial products. The idea is to partner with universities around the world, recognize the work they have done and collaborate jointly on further developing the research.

Dr Wheeler says while polymerase chain reaction (PCR) testing is the current gold standard for microRNA diagnostics, Vetsina is working with a platform technology it believes can offer an alternative method that can be more cost-effective and accessible to a wider range of users.

The company has a global sub-license to Destina's chemical-based system, which was originally invented at the University of Edinburgh. Destina uses this technology to detect disease-specific microRNAs in human pharma, while Vetsina has exclusive rights to use the platform for animal health.

“PCR requires a lot of skill and expertise to run accurately. What the Destina technology has, is a PCR-free method of detecting and quantifying microRNAs. It is more user-friendly and more accessible, and hopefully it's going to be transformative because it will allow better access for vets and agriculturists.

"The other advantage Destina has, is a technology that stabilizes the samples. By and large, transport for PCR testing requires temperature control. The Destina technology allows the samples to be transported at room temperature and stops the biomarkers from degrading for well over a week.

“Our credibility depends on being able to replicate the PCR results with a more accessible and cost-effective technology,” says Dr Wheeler who explains that the firm’s tests will work on standard laboratory equipment and will not require specialist expertise to run.

The company will initially target metabolic diseases – the first test is for canine liver disease. The start-up hopes to translate this test to other species.

"It's a little bit like a lock and a key," Dr Wheeler explains. "The microRNA is the key and someone has to develop the very specific lock that key will fit into. That's the work Destina does. We can then take the same sample that was looked at with PCR and run it on the Destina platform to check we get the same results. That's a tech transfer and validation step. The next phase is to scale things up to get reliable results.

“Our focus is on new tests in animal fertility, oncology and infectious diseases for animal health application, with the tantalising possibility of translating the research into human medicine.”

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Editor’s notes:

About Vetsina Animal Diagnostics

Vetsina Animal Diagnostics has been established to maximise the impact of a revolutionary chemical-based system for detecting nucleic acids and single nucleotide polymorphisms, for the development of simple, fast, accurate & cost-effective products for PCR-free detection of microRNAs in human medicine, by applying it to animal health.

Vetsina will also research the animal diagnostics arena to focus on targets based on market need, technical feasibility and the development of a balanced portfolio.

It was founded by Roslin Technologies and Destina Genomics.

About Roslin Technologies

Roslin Technologies is a technology commercialisation company based at Easter Bush Campus, at the centre of the largest concentration of animal science expertise in Europe. The company was created to develop commercial opportunities from the research, know-how, capabilities and intellectual property of The Roslin Institute and The Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies.

Roslin Technologies develop and supply products and services to industry, as well as providing opportunities for investors looking to capitalise on the growing demand for food and agricultural products. For additional information, visit www.roslintech.com.

About Destina Genomics

Destina Genomics Ltd is a biotech company founded in Edinburgh in 2011 by Hugh Ilyine, Juan J. Diaz-Mochon and Mark Bradley. In July 2012, a Spanish subsidiary Destina Genomica S.L. was created with the goal to accelerate a long-term growth plan. The company is focused on the application and validation of its patented state-of-the-art technologies. For additional information, visit https://destinagenomics.com/

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