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College Park firm lands SBIR grant

[Neil Adler](#)

Staff Reporter

[Innovative Biosensors](#) has been awarded a government grant worth \$110,000 for development of a test to detect Mad Cow disease.

The College Park-based biotech company, a developer of rapid tests to detect harmful pathogens, received the Small Business Innovation Research grant from the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, to assist in development of a test for prion, a protein that is the causative agent of Mad Cow disease, known scientifically as Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy or BSE.

If Innovative Biosensors were to reach a second phase for this work, the grant could potentially

be worth up to \$750,000 more.

"With this grant, we will be on our way to potentially building one of the most competitive rapid, ultra-sensitive BSE tests available," says Joe Hernandez, president and CEO of Innovative Biosensors. "There is a significant need for more rapid, more sensitive test for BSE."

Mad Cow disease is a progressive neurological disorder affecting cattle that is fatal and results from infection. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, through 2003 more than 183,000 cases of BSE were confirmed in the United Kingdom in more than 35,000 herds.

Innovative Biosensors, based at the University of Maryland at College Park incubator, raised \$3.5 million earlier this year in a Series A round of venture financing. The company, founded more than two years ago, expects to reach profitability by 2007 if all goes according to plan,



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Hernandez says. Innovative Biosensors launched its first product recently, an E. coli detection kit for food processors.

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