



About AAALAC International

Below are answers to some of the most common general questions about AAALAC International's organization, governance and the accreditation program. For more details please visit www.aaalac.org.

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What is AAALAC International?

AAALAC International is a private, nonprofit organization that promotes the humane treatment of animals in science through a voluntary accreditation program, a program status evaluation service, and educational programs.

How is AAALAC governed?

AAALAC International is governed by a Board of Directors. AAALAC is also advised by a House of Delegates which represents a wide variety of prestigious scientific, educational and professional organizations—they are referred to as AAALAC's "Member Organizations." Each of these Member Organizations appoints a Member Organization Delegate to serve a three-year term in the House of Delegates.

What is the Council on Accreditation?

The Council is comprised of highly accomplished animal care and research professionals from around the globe who conduct the program reviews and final deliberations that determine which institutions are awarded AAALAC International accreditation. Their responsibilities include conducting site visits, reviewing site visit reports, evaluating information, reviewing yearly reports from accredited institutions, and conferring the accreditation status of institutions.

Who are ad hoc Consultants?

AAALAC International maintains a worldwide pool of more than 300 ad hoc Consultants/Specialists who have expertise in traditional laboratory animal species as well as special expertise (for example, in aquatics, avian or agricultural animal science). Many also have unique discipline competencies, such as applied neuroscience, behavioral science, toxicology,

pharmacology or physiology. Ad hoc Consultants/Specialists accompany Council members on site visits and make recommendations on accreditation to the Council. These specialists add depth to the site visit team. They understand the intricacies of combining research, testing and educational missions with animal well-being.

Does AAALAC International make its own regulations?

No, AAALAC is not a regulatory body and does not make or enforce regulations. Instead, AAALAC International relies on Three Primary Standards used by the Council to evaluate programs: the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals (Guide)*, NRC 2011; the *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching (Ag Guide)*, FASS 2010; and the European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals Used for Experimental and Other Scientific Purposes, Council of Europe (ETS 123). AAALAC International does publish "Position Statements" that are used as supplemental guidelines in dealing with certain issues, such as the use of farm animals, occupational health and safety, or adequate veterinary care. AAALAC International also publishes its "Rules of Accreditation," a document that lists the minimum criteria institutions must meet before they can be considered for accreditation. (All of these resources can be found at www.aaalac.org under the "Accreditation" section.)

How extensive is an AAALAC International evaluation?

AAALAC evaluates all aspects of an animal care and use program. An animal program (as defined by AAALAC International) includes an organization's procedures and overall performance in animal care and use. The basic

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components that are evaluated include (but are not limited to) institutional policies, animal husbandry, veterinary care, and physical plant.

What deficiencies are most often noted by AAALAC site visitors?

The number and frequency of deficiencies found during site visits continues to decline. At any point in time, about 98 percent of all institutions currently participating in the accreditation program have a fully accredited status. When problem areas are cited, they most frequently involve: occupational health and safety; the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) or comparable oversight body; or heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems.

Does AAALAC International accredit agricultural animal programs?

Yes. Programs that use agricultural animals in research or for teaching are embracing the AAALAC accreditation program. The *Ag Guide*, the *Guide*, and ETS 123 are used to provide general parameters for the use of agricultural animals. AAALAC recognizes that the biomedical or agricultural research, testing or teaching objectives as well as the health and welfare of the animals will dictate when application of the recommendations of the *Ag Guide*, *Guide*, or ETS 123 is most appropriate. The collective professional judgment of the IACUC or comparable oversight body, principal investigator and veterinarian should determine which standard applies best with regard to the care and welfare of agricultural animals, based on a performance approach in the context of the requirements of the study and the species used.* The rationale for making this determination should be documented.

*For U.S. based institutions that also hold a Public Health Service Assurance, see additional information regarding this topic at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/olaw/faqs.htm#g7>.

Is accreditation available to small animal care and use programs?

Yes. The standards used to evaluate programs are universal and can be implemented in programs of any size. Likewise, programs using nontraditional research animals, such as fish or birds, are also encouraged to seek accreditation.

Does AAALAC use the same standards to evaluate animal programs outside of the U.S.?

Because each country has its own set of laws and regulations, AAALAC International site visitors use a customized approach for evaluating programs in different countries. Evaluators take into account applicable laws and regulations of the host country, and the overall performance of the program as it relates to appropriate animal welfare objectives. They also evaluate the extent to which the program conforms with the principles outlined in AAALAC's three primary standards and other international standards.

What references are used by AAALAC evaluators?

The principal references used to evaluate animal programs are the *Guide*, the *Ag Guide*, and ETS 123. Supplemental references are used to provide information on specialty topics and widely accepted scientific practices, procedures and techniques. A complete resource list is available on the AAALAC web site (www.aaalac.org/accreditation/resources.cfm) or from the AAALAC International office.

Are the results of an AAALAC site visit confidential?

Yes. The entire accreditation process is confidential. The accreditation evaluation and its results are kept between the organization seeking accreditation and AAALAC International—even if deficiencies are found. AAALAC's purpose is to provide a peer evaluation that results in valuable information that

an organization can use to improve its program and achieve new levels of excellence. The Board of Directors, House of Delegates, Council members, ad hoc Consultants/Specialists and AAALAC staff are all required to sign confidentiality agreements. Conflict-of-interest statements are also signed by each site visitor. AAALAC International representatives agree to treat all materials as privileged and safeguard the materials in their possession.

How does an institution maintain AAALAC accreditation?

Once accredited, an institution must file an Annual Report with AAALAC International, noting any changes and the current condition of the animal care and use program. Each accredited institution is revisited and re-evaluated once every three years in order to maintain its accredited status.

How much does accreditation cost?

Organizations seeking and maintaining accreditation are asked to pay a one-time application fee and subsequent annual fees. Both of these fees are based on a sliding scale that generally correlates with the size of an institution's animal facility. An institution that has very few animals will pay much smaller fees than one that maintains a large vivarium and extensive support areas. The fees cover the cost of periodic site visits and administrative expenses (see www.aaalac.org/accreditation/fees.cfm).

How many animal care and use programs are accredited by AAALAC International?

Almost 1,000 animal care and use programs in 44 countries have earned AAALAC International accreditation. These programs include academic institutions, commercial organizations, government agencies, hospitals, nonprofit organizations, and biotechnology and pharmaceutical companies.

