AAALAC International
Programme Description Instructions
(updated March 2023)

Instructions for completing and submitting the Programme Description

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The following instructions are to assist you in completing your Institutional Animal Care and Use Programme Description for AAALAC International. The completed Programme Description is comprised of three parts: Introduction; Description; and Appendices. If more than one administrative unit is responsible for animal care, each item in the Programme Description must be addressed for each animal care programme. This may be done by describing the largest programme and noting the exceptions as they apply to other programmes. **An accurate Programme Description is necessary to provide Council with sufficient information to make an objective judgment concerning accreditation of a unit.** Representatives from AAALAC International will review the Programme Description and, at the time of the site visit, evaluate the programme and facilities for conformance with AAALAC International's Three Primary Standards: the European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals Used for Experimental and Other Scientific Purposes, Council of Europe (ETS 123); the *Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals* (*Guide*), NRC 2011; and the *Guide for the Care and Use of Agricultural Animals in Research and Teaching* (*Ag Guide*), FASS 2010.. In the Introduction, the institution should describe how the Three Primary Standards are used and list other pertinent local and/or national regulations.

Notes:

a. The outline of the Programme Description basically follows that of the *Guide*. If you are in doubt about certain questions, you should refer to the *Guide* for clarification.

b. There have been instances when institutions have had information from their AAALAC Programme Descriptions requested by the public through laws that allow that (e.g., the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) in the US or a Public Records Request). Institutions are encouraged to contact their legal counsel for guidance since access to public information varies among countries. If your institution deems that parts of the information requested by AAALAC International are of a particularly sensitive or confidential nature (e.g., building floor plans, building security features, proprietary research information, personnel names, room numbers, vendor identification), this information can be omitted from the Programme Description and provided to the site

visitors by other means. For example, codes may be used for buildings such as Building A, B, and C or 1, 2, and 3, etc. The same can be applied for housing and procedure rooms or laboratories, such as Room a, b, c, or i, ii, iii. Titles alone may be used for key institutional representatives whose identity is not already publicly available such as Facility Manager, Building A; Animal Care Supervisor, Building B; Nonaffiliated Member; and Scientific Member. **Please contact the AAALAC International office for additional guidance in these cases**.

c. Throughout the text, "IACUC/OB" will be used to indicate the body or collection of bodies that perform the oversight of the programme. Programmatic oversight of all aspects of the animal care and use programme has to be explained in Section 2.I.B of the Programme Description. Irrespective of whether the programmatic oversight is carried out by just one body or is delegated to several bodies (e.g., protocol review to an Ethics Committee either internal or external, to an Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, and/or to the Competent Authority; oversight of animal care and welfare and promotion of the 3Rs to an Animal Welfare Body; occupational health and safety to the Occupational Health Unit, etc.), it must be described how the comprehensive programmatic oversight is implemented, including the responsibility, functions and authority of the body/bodies involved.

I.   Programme Description Format

A.   To complete the Programme Description:

1.   Download and save the Programme Description to your computer. (Save as a .doc or .docx file - Microsoft Word Document).

2.   Complete the Programme Description. Insert your cursor in the dotted-lined box designated for your response to each question. This will assist reviewers of the document in easily determining each response. You may type information in these spaces or copy and paste* information from another document (e.g., older version of the Programme Description).

Please do not alter the Programme Description by deleting questions that are not applicable.

*Please note that if you "copy & paste" from a different document there may be embedded formatting, which may interfere with the information pasting into the boxes (For example, if you are copying from a previous Programme Description the solid box will also be inserted). To solve this issue, please use the following steps.

If using Office 2007 or a newer version of Word:

a. "Copy" selected text and ensure that you have not included a space before or after the selected text.

b. Insert curser in box where you want to "Paste" the text *(follow additional PC and MAC directions below)*

If using a PC:

i. Using the right side button of the mouse click in the box where you would like the information to go.
ii. In the drop down that appears select the third icon under "paste," select– "Keep Text Only"

If using a MAC:

i. Go to the "Edit" tab then select "Paste Special"
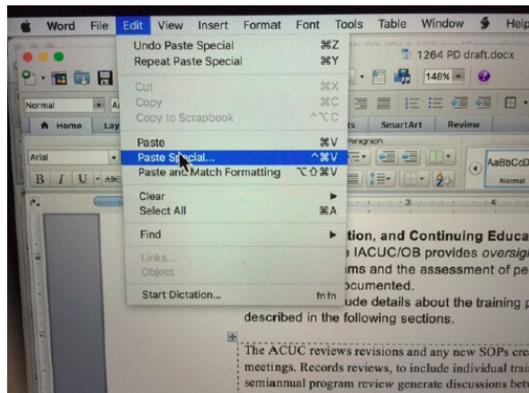
ii. Select "Paste," "Unformatted Text" then "OK" in the menu that pops up
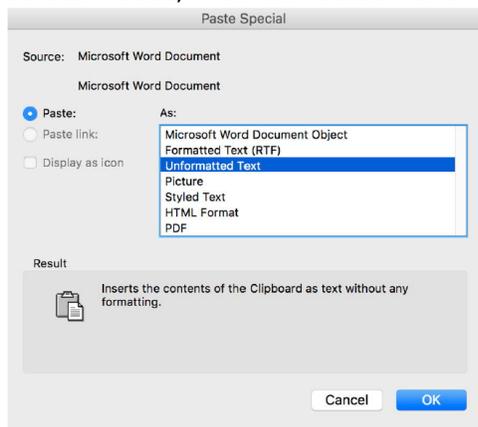
3. Once the document is complete, update the Table of Contents. This is accomplished by placing the cursor in the text box of the Table of Contents (located above Section 1), the "Update Table" icon should appear above the text

Cursor goes here

Click here

Choose "Update page numbers only" then "OK"
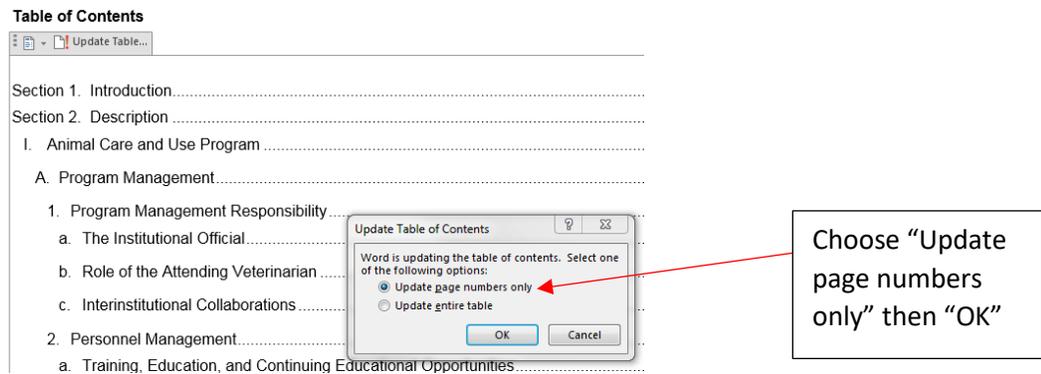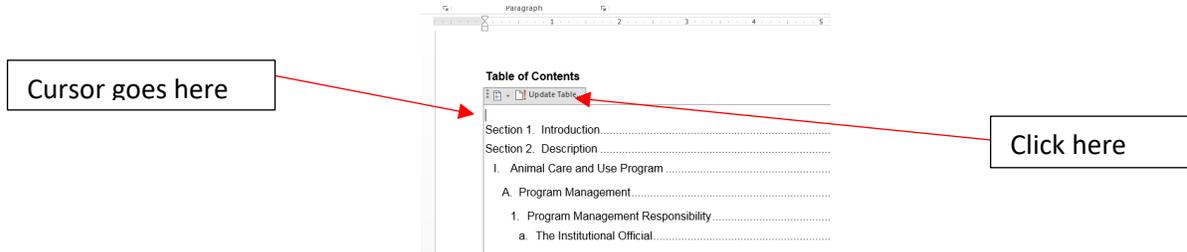
If working in an older version of Word go to the "references" tab in the top most ribbon.

Choose this ribbon

Select this and follow the second picture above
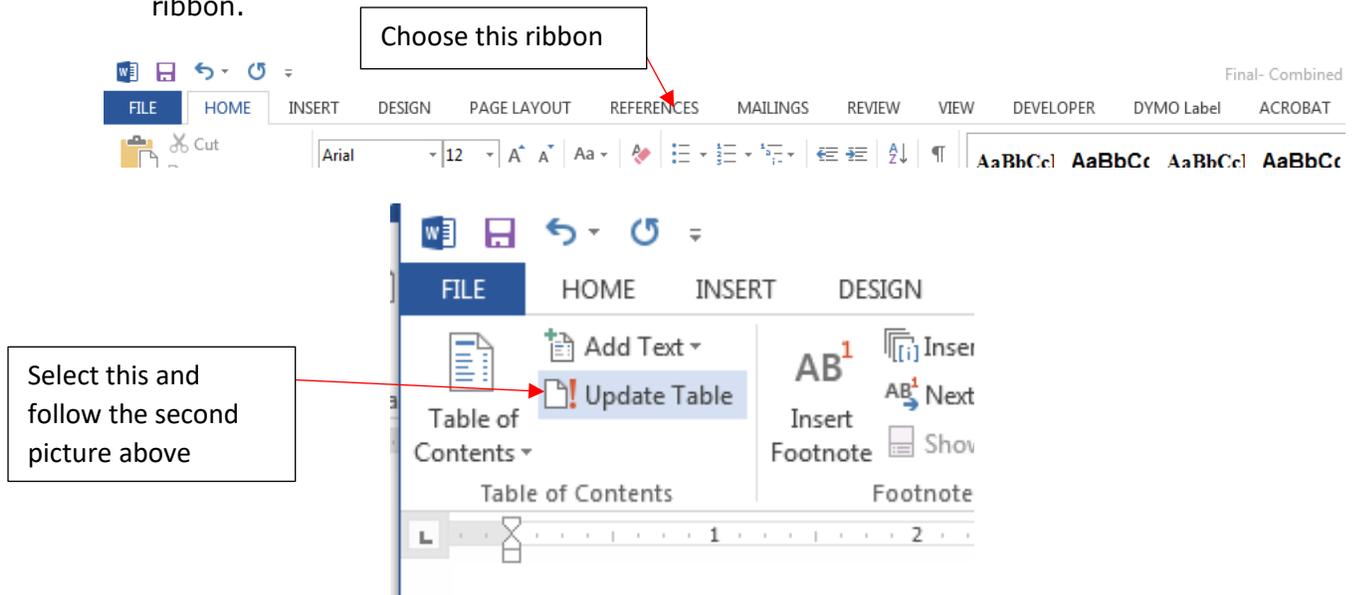
4. **Save** the document as you are working in it. When complete submit it to AAALAC International (See the instructions for submission of the Programme Description to the AAALAC International Executive Office).

B.   For each stated heading/subheading, responses should be succinct yet provide sufficient detail so that AAALAC International reviewers can understand and assess the programme. Each question of the Programme Description should be completed. It is imperative to respond to all items. If items are not applicable, please so indicate. **Please do not alter the Programme Description by deleting questions that are not applicable.** In such cases, the Programme Description will be returned for completion, which may result in a delay of your on-site assessment.

C.   Appendices and references to other sections in lieu of an accurate Programme Description are not acceptable. An accurate, concise overall Description is dependent, in part, on the completeness of information. Do not reference appendices in lieu of providing a brief description directly in the Programme Description. For instance, referencing a copy of a Standard Operating Procedure or IACUC/OB Policy included in the Appendices should not be used as a substitute for describing the cage and room sanitation programme or institutional expectations for social animal housing. Please note that many sections within the Programme Description allow you to provide information as a table within the text or as an additional Appendix, if preferred.

II.   Introduction/Description (Exceptions, Contract Facilities, Animal Use Areas)

A.   Please note that any IACUC/OB-approved programme-wide exception(s) to the ETS 123, *Guide* and/or other applicable guidelines or regulations must be described in detail. In each appropriate section of the Programme Description (e.g., sanitation, animal housing density), state the approved programme-wide exception. In addition:

1.   Provide the rationale for why the programme-wide exception to the ETS 123, *Guide* and/or applicable regulations is necessary.

2.   Provide a summary of the basis for IACUC/OB approval of the programme-wide exception, including references, data and other relevant considerations. Please note that it is not necessary to supply detailed data with the Programme Description; however, the site visitors may wish to see evidence at the time of the site visit.

3.   Summarise the procedural details of the ongoing IACUC/OB monitoring of all approved programme-wide exceptions.

B.   **Contract Facilities**. According to the AAALAC International Rules of Accreditation, if the care or use of animals owned by an AAALAC International accredited institution or an institution applying for accreditation is contracted, then AAALAC International considers the contractor's animal care programmes and facilities to be an integral part of the institution's animal care and use programme. Examples may include contracted research laboratories, breeding services, diagnostic/imaging facilities, quarantine facilities, etc.

If the contract facility is not separately accredited, the animal care and use programme and facilities of the contractor that relate to the animals owned by the institution seeking accreditation *must be included and identified as contractor-provided in the Programme Description*. All elements of the contract facilities' animal care and use programme (personnel training, IACUC/OB review of protocols,

programmes and facilities, occupational health and safety programme, veterinary care, etc.) that potentially impact those animals will be evaluated as a part of the institution's site visit to determine conformance with AAALAC International standards. The institution must make arrangements for the site visit of the contractor's facilities and for review of relevant elements of the animal care and use programme provided by contract. If, based on the AAALAC International Rules of Accreditation, a review of contract programmes and facilities is going to be required, the AAALAC International office must be informed as soon as possible so a decision may be made regarding the length of the site visit. If your institution does not own the animals, but owns the data (or intellectual property) that results from studies or procedures conducted using those animals, AAALAC will not visit the non-accredited site.

In those cases where a contractor provides personnel for the animal care and use programme within the accredited institution's facility, the occupational health and safety programme and employee training programme will be evaluated to determine conformance with AAALAC International standards.

If the contractor's facilities are fully accredited by AAALAC International, a description of the contractor's programmes and facilities is not required, and the contractor's facilities may be exempt from the associated institution's site visit at the discretion of AAALAC International.

C. **Oversight of Invertebrates.** Please refer to AAALAC International's Frequently Asked Question, "Invertebrate animals," and AAALAC's Reference Resource, Guidelines for the Care and Welfare of Cephalopods in Research-A consensus based on an initiative by CephRes, FELASA and the Boyd Group, (Note AAALAC International's caveats regarding this resource). AAALAC International considers the information regarding the humane care of cephalopods, including capture, transport, housing, handling, disease detection/prevention/treatment, survival surgery, husbandry and euthanasia of these sentient and highly intelligent invertebrate marine animals to be appropriate to apply during site visits. Although there are no current regulations or guidelines requiring oversight of cephalopods in many countries, adhering to the principles of the 3R's, justifying their use for research, commitment of appropriate resources and institutional oversight (IACUC or equivalent oversight body) is recommended for research activities involving cephalopods.

III.   Appendices

The following information is to be appended to the Programme Description. Please provide the information requested in Items 1-7 and 11-18 in English. Items 8-10 may be provided in the primary language used at the host institution.

In some cases, a programme may have been recently established and does not have sufficient historical records to provide the 3 years of documentation that is requested below to be available during the site visit. In these instances, all of the existing requested documentation should be readily available during the site visit.

1. **Glossary of Abbreviations and Acronyms**. Please provide a table defining abbreviations and acronyms used in this Programme Description.

2. **Summary of Animal Housing and Support Sites**. In the table provided, briefly summarise the animal facility or facilities, noting the number of areas in which animals are housed (buildings, floors, farms, satellite housing facilities, etc.), the total square footage/metres (or acreage) for necessary support of the animal care and use programme covered by this Description (water treatment plant/area if housing aquatic or amphibian species, cage washing facilities, service corridors, etc. and additional areas to be considered are enumerated in the *Guide*)*. Detailed information for satellite housing facilities is requested in Appendix 17. Include only one line entry for satellite housing facilities in this table to provide the total square footage/metres for all satellite housing areas listed in Appendix 17. If more than one facility/site, note the approximate distance (yards/miles or metres/kilometres) to each facility from a reference point such as from the largest animal facility. A campus/site map (with a distance scale) may be included as an additional Appendix (Appendix 2.1) to provide this information.

   Provide for each facility the species housed, approximate daily census for each species (these numbers do not need to be exact, but are useful for gauging animal programme size and complexity), and the person in charge of location/site. A blank form denoting the information requested is included.

   *See Addendum A - Animal Facility Square Footage/Metres Compilation for guidance in calculating the size of your animal care and use programme.

3. **Line Drawings.** Provide floor plans of each centralized animal housing facility. Plans should be provided on 8.5" x 11" or A4 paper. Ensure that the drawings are legible, including room numbers if used, and the use of each room is indicated (animal housing, procedure room, clean cage storage, hazardous waste storage, etc.) either directly on the drawing or in a Key/Table. Campus/site map(s) indicating all animal housing and use locations should be included, if applicable.

4. **Organisational Chart(s**). Provide an accurate, current, and detailed organisation chart or charts that detail the lines of authority from the Institutional Official to the Designated Veterinarian, the IACUC/OB, and personnel providing animal care. If applicable, include personnel responsible for managing satellite housing areas/locations and depict the reporting relationship between the Designated Veterinarian and other(s) having a direct role in providing veterinary care.

5. **Animal Usage.** Information should be provided for all animals approved for use in research, teaching or testing, including those which may be used or housed in laboratories outside the animal care facility. Of particular interest is information on those animals which are used in research projects involving recovery surgical procedures, behavioural or other testing requiring chairing or other forms of restraint, or exposure to potentially hazardous materials. An alternate format is acceptable as long as the information requested is provided. Also, provide an approximate annual usage for all species, and if applicable, a description/definition of any pain/distress/severity classification used within the Animal Usage table.

6. **Personnel Medical Evaluation Form.** Provide a blank copy of form(s) used by medically-trained personnel to review individual health assessment, individual risk assessment, health history evaluation, health questionnaire, periodic medical evaluation, etc. If form(s) are not used, include a description of how such evaluations are performed in the Programme Description (Section 2.I.A.2.b.ii.1).d).

7. **IACUC/OB Membership Roster.** Provide a Committee roster, indicating names, degrees, membership role, and affiliation (e.g., Department/Division). If there is also an equivalent to the IACUC/OB external to the institution (e.g., contract, governmental, etc.), relevant information regarding its composition and functioning should be provided.

8. **IACUC/OB Meeting Minutes.** Include the minutes of the last two IACUC/OB meetings; the past 3 years' meeting minutes should be available during the site visit. For equivalents to the IACUC/OB external to the institution, official communications related to its review (e.g., submission/approval of protocols) of the institution should be available.

9. **IACUC/OB Protocol/Project Form.** Provide a blank copy of form(s) used by the IACUC/OB to review and approve studies. Include forms used for annual (or other periodic) renewal, modifications, amendments, etc., as applicable.

10. **IACUC/OB Periodic Programme Review and Facility Inspection Report.** Include the most recent report of the IACUC/OB review of the animal care and use programme and facilities inspections; the past 3 years' reports should be available during the site visit.

11. **HVAC Summary.** Summarise the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems for each animal facility, including all satellite facilities. Include all animal holding rooms (including satellite holding rooms), surgical facilities, procedure rooms, and support spaces integral to animal facilities (e.g., cage wash, cage and feed storage areas, necropsy, treatment). *Measurement of air exchange rates and verification of relative pressure within the areas mentioned above must be completed* **within the 12 months preceding completion of this Programme Description.**

12. **Aquatic Systems Summary.** Provide species-specific water management and monitoring programmes for each aquatic animal facility, including all satellite facilities, rooms, and enclosures. Blank forms denoting information requested are included.

13. **Primary Enclosures and Animal Space Provisions.** In the table provided, summarise primary enclosures and accepted animal density. Identify the performance criteria and guiding documents (e.g., ETS 123, *Guide*, *Ag Guide* and/or other applicable standards) used by the IACUC/OB to establish adequacy of space provided for all research animals including traditional laboratory species, agricultural animals, aquatic species, and wildlife when reviewing biomedical, field, and agricultural research studies.

14. **Cleaning and Disinfection of the Micro- and Macro-Environment.** Describe the cleaning and disinfection methods for both the micro- and macro-environment. Note the washing/sanitising frequency and method for each area and type of equipment. A blank form denoting information requested is included.

15. **Facilities and Equipment for Sanitising Materials.** Summarise the facilities and equipment used to sanitise animal related equipment (tunnel washer, bottle washer, rack washer, bulk autoclave, hand washing area, bedding dispensing unit, etc.). Note that some descriptions may be combined if all share identical features

(e.g., all rack washers).

16. **Lighting Summary.** Summarise the lighting system for the animal housing facility(ies). For each species or holding room type, list light intensity (range), construction features (e.g., water resistance), photoperiod (light:dark) and control (e.g., automatic versus manual, phasing). For systems automatically controlling photoperiod, describe override mechanisms (including alarms, if applicable).

17. **Satellite Housing Facilities.** Criteria used to define "Satellite Animal Holding Area" is to be included in the Programme Description Section 2.IV.C. In the Appendix, summarise these animal housing areas. Note that the total square footage/metres for all of these areas must also be included in the Summary of Animal Housing and Support Sites (Appendix 2), and applicable information regarding these areas included in the Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Summary (Appendix 11) and Lighting Systems Summary (Appendix 16).

18.   **Cephalopod Oversight**. Summarize, if applicable, the oversight of cephalopods within the programme. Please note that the care and use of cephalopods may be described in the relevant sections (i.e., housing, husbandry, veterinary care, surgery and euthanasia, etc.) within the Programme Description or in Appendix 18.

IV.   Supplemental Information

The following information for the past 3 years, if available, should be provided for review at the site visit:

1. Copies of pertinent government or other oversight agency inspection reports and responses (if applicable). Although the Rules of Accreditation (Section 2.f) require accredited institutions to promptly report adverse events relating to animal care and use programmes and other serious incidents or concerns that negatively impact animal well-being, any reports not previously forwarded to AAALAC should also be available for review.

2. Copies of annual or other periodic reports submitted to government or other regulatory bodies, if applicable.

3. Other information relevant to the animal care and use programme, such as policies, procedures, or plans relating to environmental enrichment and canine exercise.

4. Copy of the Disaster Plan that outlines specific actions and procedures related to the animal facility and the welfare of animals and staff.

V.   General Information

Board and Council members, Council member Emeriti, ad hoc Consultants/Specialists, and staff representing AAALAC International are required to execute a "Confidentiality and

Secrecy Agreement" and AAALAC complies with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Conflict of Interest statements are also declared by each site visitor. AAALAC International representatives agree to treat all materials as privileged and safeguard material in their possession. Blank copies of these agreements are available on request.

VI.   Instructions for Submitting the Programme Description to the AAALAC International Executive Office

1.   A cover letter should accompany the Programme Description addressing specific remarks or requests pertinent to the site visit (e.g., specific dates that would be inconvenient, entry requirements).

2.   The CERTIFICATION page signed by the Institutional Official **(updated version dated 10/2025)** must be submitted with the Programme Description.

3.   Please submit electronically, either via email or a secure document transfer site (i.e., hightail, dropbox, etc.) with no more than four attachments in total or one hard copy of completed materials.

   a.   If submitted electronically, please use your six digit file number in the email subject line (not applicable to new applicants).

      i.   Submit in Microsoft Word Document (.doc or .docx) or Portable Document Format (.pdf) to programdescription@aaalac.org.

      ii.   Do not embed attachments as links within the main document.

   b.   If submitted by hard copy, the document should be two-sided to reduce both volume and mailing costs. **Please do not staple, bind, or otherwise assemble your materials**.

Mail: AAALAC International
5205 Chairman's Court, Suite 300
Frederick, MD 21703

Addendum A: Animal Facility Square Footage/Metres Compilation

Actual square footage/Metres:
Animal rooms
Corridors
Food and Bedding storage rooms
Cage storage rooms
Cage wash rooms
Supply and equipment storage areas
Surgery suites
Treatment and procedure rooms
Incinerator rooms
Diagnostic rooms (i.e. pathology, x-ray, necropsy)
Waste storage areas
Restrooms (within the animal facility)
Employee lounge areas
Outdoor pens for primates, dogs, cats and birds
Laboratories within the facilities related to animal research
Offices within the animal facilities associated with the animal care programme
Environmentally-controlled domestic animal housing buildings

Square footage/Metres figured on the amount of use dedicated to the animal facility:
Loading docks (number used for programme)
Elevators (number used for programme)

Special square footage/Metres calculations:
Farm barns and sheds (not used for biomedical studies) are calculated according to the numbers of buildings and the size of the programme generally not at actual square footage.
Acreage may contribute to increasing the Group size by one group (evaluated on a case-by-case basis)

Square footage/Metres not included:
Janitor's closets
Stairwells
Pastures
Feed lots
Outdoor pens for livestock
Investigator's laboratories outside the animal facilities
Ancillary laboratories outside the animal facility